

Workers of the World, Unite!

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Bolivia

Revolutionary Communist Party – PCR

Simón Arancibia (Member of the Political Bureau)

The Semi-Bonapartism of Evo Morales

“Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under given circumstances directly encountered and inherited from the past” (Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1978, p. 9).

What is Bonapartism?

Between December of 1851 and March of 1852, Karl Marx wrote *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in which he analyzes from the point of view of historical materialism the process of accumulation of forces that led to the coup of Louis Bonaparte (December 2, 1851). The scientific study of historical processes should start from an analysis of the class struggle; it should be noted that the political cycle that Marx describes began with the Revolution of February 1848 that led to the abdication of the King and the beginning of the Second Republic; despite the imposing numerical presence of the proletariat in the struggles for social transformation, the bourgeoisie won political hegemony. The bourgeoisie was established in the state apparatus and in June 1848 it applied anti-popular measures; faced with the workers’ protest (June Days) the government declared a state of siege and repressed the demonstrators. Having defeated the working class politically, the different factions of the bourgeoisie (commercial and industrial) and petty bourgeoisie entered into open conflict for the administration of the state apparatus. The solution of the conflicts between factions of the bourgeoisie would not be found in the National Assembly or in the Parties, but in the conciliatory role of Louis Bonaparte.

Louis Bonaparte was not of bourgeois origin but a peasant farmer. Marx stated that:

“The Bonaparte dynasty represents not the revolutionary, but the conservative peasant; not the peasant that strikes out beyond the condition of his social existence, the small holding, but rather the peasant who wants to consolidate this holding, not the country folk

who, linked up with the towns, want to overthrow the old order through their own energies, but on the contrary those who, in stupefied seclusion within this old order, want to see themselves and their small holdings saved and favored by the ghost of the empire. It represents not the enlightenment, but the superstition of the peasant; not his judgment, but his prejudice; not his future, but his past” (ibid., p. 127)

In December of 1848, Bonaparte, president-elect with the majority support of the French peasantry as President and within the state apparatus, there was a conflict between the power of the executive and the legislature, whose result was the victory “*of force without words over the force of words*” (Ibid., p. 122).

The bourgeoisie (commercial and industrial), faced with a crisis, suffered an organic break between the political ‘representatives’ (parties and parliamentarians) and the extra-parliamentary bourgeoisie:

“The extra-parliamentary mass of the bourgeoisie, on the other hand, by its servility towards the President, by its vilification of parliament, by its brutal maltreatment of its own press, invited Bonaparte to suppress and annihilate its speaking and writing section, its politicians and its literati, its platform and its press, in order that it might then be able to pursue its private affairs with full confidence in the protection of a strong and unrestricted government” (ibid., p. 107).

The bourgeoisie ceded the role of conciliator to Bonaparte, who tried to appear as the “patriarchal benefactor of all classes,” but as Marx pointed out, he “cannot give to one class without taking it from another” (ibid., p. 136). The Bonaparte government was characterized by the indiscriminate distribution of public resources, the increase of infrastructure as a means of submission to regional authorities, demagoguery extolling ‘democratic’ values, the expansion of the state bureaucratic apparatus, the strong and authoritarian state with the preponderance of the army and the use of delinquent lumpen groups (December 10 Society) for political end. In this situation, the extension of public functions was indispensable since the State was concentrated in one single person – Bonaparte.

Lenin characterized Bonapartism as “the maneuvering of state power, which leans on the military clique (on the worst elements of the army) for support, between two hostile classes and forces which more or less balance each other out,” and with the discourse of

“fancy phrases about saving the country are particularly fashionable (concealing the desire to save the imperialist program of the bourgeoisie)” (“The Beginning of Bolshevism,” *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 224). Lenin stated that “Bonapartism emerges, given a certain relationship between classes and their struggle. However, to recognize the inevitability of Bonapartism does not at all mean forgetting the inevitability of its downfall” (*Ibid.*, p. 225).

Bonapartism in Bolivia

In his studies Zavaleta explained two Bonapartist or semi-Bonapartist periods in the country’s recent history – the military governments of Ovando and Torres.¹ According to Zavaleta, the first occurred in the context of the failure of the economic and diplomatic policy of the United States in Bolivia and the failure of the ideological left. He explained the immense contradictions of the Ovando government that:

“without worrying about winning the support of the miners and at the same time nationalizing mining exports, immediately persecuting the main leader of the workers and at the same time nationalizing Gulf Oil, offering to break the embargo to Cuba with Bolivian oil and at the same time leaving Debray in a cruel prison, he offered the typical image of a Bonapartist government” (René. Zavaleta, *Collected Works*, Vol. I, 2011, La Paz, Plural, p. 656).

The role of conciliation between the Armed Forces and the popular masses, between the imperialist interests and popular interests, Bonapartism in Bolivia, as a backward country supposes “the above-class, top down, anti-imperialist superposition, which is usually paralyzed in its own defensive game but that proposes the political service of... the realization of the modern nation “ (Zavaleta p. 650). In the case of Torres, he took power as a result of the attempted fascist coup and the popular resistance led by the COB²; therefore the political context assumed a greater political force of the working class. “Torres represented a favorable opportunity for the left but not a systematic and coherent construction of the left” (Zavaleta, p. 336), the organiza-

¹ The Ovando government lasted from September of 1969 to October of 1970. The Torres government lasted from October of 1970 to August of 1971, when it was defeated by a coup by Banzer.

² COB, Bolivian Workers’ Federation, the united organization of the Bolivian workers.

tion of the Popular Assembly, unprecedented in Latin American history, challenged the trade unions and parties of the left to take a leading role in the struggle for power.

The Bonapartist or semi-Bonapartist governments of Ovando and Torres, according to Zavaleta, represented “a strange ideological victory of the left but at the price of its own practical validity in power” (Zavaleta, p. 649) since “once again, a hybrid and efficient nationalist left stole the program of the ideological left, which was forced to adapt to events that it could not lead” (Zavaleta, p. 655) Like the National Revolution of 1952, the slogans, programs and discourse of the left had been used by nationalism with greater efficiency. The left could claim an ideological victory, since its ideas were set in motion (although in an abstract, incomplete and superficial way) but on the other hand its ability to exercise political power in the country was questioned.

The Semi-Bonapartism of Evo Morales

The election of Evo Morales in 2005 represented a break with “negotiated democracy”, the accumulation of forces and the popular resistance (March for Life, March for Territory and Dignity, Water War, Gas War, et.) and opened the possibility for a transition to an alternative government. The conflicts created between the central state and the ‘half moon’³ (with a racist, fascist and reactionary essence) forced the agro-industrial and banking bourgeoisie to negotiate with the emerging commercial bourgeoisie, resulting in the Constitutional wording agreed upon between the MAS⁴ and the opposition parliamentarians (the first wording with groups of the UN⁵ in the Constituent Assembly and the final wording with PODEMOS⁶ in the Senate). Although the State Political Constitution of 2009 included a progressive advance in social rights, its essence was one

³ Half Moon refers to the eastern and southern departments of the country, which from 2006 to 2009 were governed by the regional right-wing opposition.

⁴ MAS, Movement Towards Socialism, Evo Morales’ party.

⁵ UN, National Unity, political party of the center-right led by the business owner Samuel Doria Medina.

⁶ PODEMOS, opposition political alliance that existed between 2005 and 2009, led by former president Jorge Quiroga.

of respect for big private property over the means of production, that is, for the capitalist system.

After the approval of the new Constitution, the bourgeois opposition was not able to articulate a national political project, but this lack of articulation was not only due to the inability of the political operators but to a phenomenon of organic split between the extra-parliamentary bourgeoisie and the bourgeois opposition at the national level. The bourgeoisie still maintained its political structures for political administration at the municipal and departmental level; however it did not consider it necessary to contest the executive power since its economic interests were protected by the MAS government; this is a clear example of unprecedented growth in the agro-industrial and banking sectors. The stability provided by the Evo Morales government for its transnational ‘partners’ and international creditors, together with high prices of hydrocarbons and minerals at the beginning of the government, allowed for the necessary economic flow for policies of economic redistribution (bonuses, etc.).

The centralization of the state in the person of Evo Morales was made clear, that is, the discretionary implementation of projects through the program “Evo Fulfills,” the exaggerated handling of the image of the president at all public works, the shameful subjection of the legislative, judicial and electoral organs to the personal will of the chief executive. Along with the centralization of the state, the ranks of the state bureaucracy swelled, by political atonage of public office. There is also a growing authoritarian and repressive tendency, there are many examples of those who have been victims of state repression: TIPNIS⁷, Achacachi, ENATEX⁸, disabled people,

⁷ Indigenous Territory National Park Isiboro Secure, located in the departments of Cochabamba and Beni. The Evo Morales government tried to divide this territory by a highway as part of the IIRSA project. The resistance of the indigenous people in the 8th Indigenous arch for Life and Territory (2012) was brutally repressed in the locality of Chaparina.

⁸ ENATEX, National Textile Enterprise, created by the Evo Morales government beginning with the purchase of the private company Ametex in June of 2012, led to bankruptcy and was closed in May of 2016, leading to the lay-off of at least 900 workers; the workers’ demonstrations were repressed.

university students, ADEPCOCA⁹, etc. There was a tight control over the union leaderships through patronage and corporatization, using ‘social movements’ as a shock group when necessary, and resorting to political persecution and the courts to keep the rebellious sectors quiet. This went so far as to illegally force the holding of a Congress of the Bolivian Workers Federation to subject the top union leadership of the country to his will.

Although Evo Morales, unlike former (semi-)Bonapartist governments in Bolivia such as those of Ovando or Torres, was not a career soldier, he managed to establish a consensus with the military high command based on bonuses and a commitment not to declassify the archives of the dictatorship (which supposedly did not exist). This pact went hand in hand with a chauvinist and patriotic discourse against the ‘empire’, which sought to polarize the idea of social change versus the old (neoliberal, etc) order. Just as Ovando showed constant internal contradictions in seeking to conciliate radical discourse with reactionary politics, in seeking a balance between the interests of his ‘social movements’ and the interests of his transnational ‘partners’.

The Re-Re-Re-Election of Evo Morales

Bonapartism is not a mode of production, but a form of government of the Capitalist State, which results from a transitory response to situations of crises; its conciliatory nature (it “cannot give to one class without taking it from another”) obliges the relationship of forces in the class struggle to eventually resolve the transitory situation. To maintain a Bonapartist government, the Bonaparte must become a personification of the State.

The need to keep Evo Morales as president in order to maintain the balance between the factions of the bourgeoisie, clashes with the legalist fetishism of the (mainly urban) petty bourgeoisie to abstractly defend ‘democracy’ and the Political Constitution of the State. Added to this phenomenon, the rejection of acts of corruption

⁹ ADEPCOCA, Departmental Association of Coca Producers of La Paz, and organization which represents the coca peasants of the Yungas (a traditional zone) who opposed the government’s Coca Law, which favored the region of Chapare (Cochabamba), from which Evo Morales came. The government tried to take over its headquarters with the police guard but was defeated by a popular mobilization (March of 2017).

and authoritarianism by the State created an electoral defeat for the ruling party on February 21 in its attempt to change the articles of the constitution in order to permit Evo's re-election in 2019 (after he authorized a second re-election in 2014 through the Constitutional Court).

On November 28, the Plurinational Constitutional Court (TCP) announced the Plurinational Constitutional Judgment 0084/2017, instructing the preferential application of Article 23 of the American Convention on Human Rights regarding articles 156, 168, 285.II and 288 of the Constitution in the phrases "only once continuously" and "continuously only once"; then it declared the unconstitutionality of the same phrases in the Law of the Electoral Regime. What this ruling meant was that in fact the elected authorities at the national level did not have to abide by the constitutional and legal norms that limit(ed) the re-election. Evo Morales had a clear path to become a presidential candidate in the 2019 general elections.

The legitimacy of the TCP decision could be questioned by contrasting it with the majority vote of February 21 against the partial reform of the Constitution. One can also question the legitimacy of the TCP judges (due to the few votes they received in 2012 and the prosecution of the judges of the TCP), one can question the legal foundations of the judicial decision. However, the essence of the judgment is not one of legalism, nor of legitimacy, but of the political necessity of maintaining the status quo in the country to guarantee a strong State that can confront the economic crisis; the various factions of the Bolivian bourgeoisie coincide in this interest.

How Should the Left Act?

"The development of Bolivian events gives us another of its lessons for the left, that it must always try to take the initiative; that, once it achieves an apparatus corresponding to the rise of the masses (which did not happen), it must seize the initiative in order to never let it go" (Zavaleta, p. 341)

The starting point for the Bolivian left is to correctly understand and characterize the nature of the Evo Morales government, the point on which the traditional left has failed miserably. On the one hand is the opportunism that puts it at the tail of the Morales government, justifying its tepidity by its allegedly anti-imperialist discourse and populist measures. On the other hand is the infantilism that unites with the parties of the bourgeois opposition in character-

izing the government as a dictatorship (fascistic, etc.) and defend the State Political Constitution and liberal democracy as the greatest thing. Both positions give the leading role to the various factions of the bourgeoisie, limiting themselves to being auxiliary forces in a supposedly ‘democratic’ program.

Let us start from the Marxist concepts: every State is the dictatorship of one social class over another; liberal democracy is nothing more than the legitimization of the bourgeoisie’s rule over the proletariat. The Constitution is nothing more than a social pact between factions of the bourgeoisie to establish the rules of coexistence and ensure ‘sacred’ private ownership of the means of production. The differences between regimes of liberal democracy and de facto regimes cannot be denied, just as there can be no denying the differences in terms of political rights between different constitutional wordings, but these nuances do not change the class essence of every state and government.

We must understand that Evo Morales, as a semi-Bonapartist, plays a role of conciliation and balance between factions of the bourgeoisie (agro-industrial, commercial, banking) in conflict. The State, despite the Plurinational label, never ceased to be a bourgeois state whose role is to protect private ownership of the means of production. Lenin points out that in Bonapartist situations the Party



Popular demonstrations against the government of Evo Morales

demands “soberness and the ability to see and speak of things as they are” (ibid., p. 225).

Following the Leninist guidelines, the essence of the Bonapartist government must be shown to the working classes, in order to accumulate forces to overthrow the Bonaparte and seize power, taking care not to play at insurrection but to strike accurate, planned blows, directed by the general staff of the proletariat (its Party). Lenin warned that:

“The proletarian party has every opportunity to choose the tactics and form, or forms, of organization that will in any circumstances prevent unexpected (seemingly unexpected) Bonapartist persecutions from cutting short its existence and its regular messages to the people” (ibid., p. 226).

The role of the Bolivian revolutionaries is to continue building our Revolutionary Communist Party, as a vanguard that must be able to organize the Revolution and when the right moment comes to lead the popular insurgency to the seizure of people’s power and the building of Socialism. We must be ready and willing to combine all forms of struggle, so that we can defend ourselves at the polls and in the streets, and continue to organize strongly in the factories, mines, fields, schools, universities and neighborhoods. We must be certain that the future will be socialist, and with the working majorities, with political clarity and consistent struggle, we will win it.

April, 2018



Repression by the Evo Morales government
against the demonstrations of Achacachi

Brazil

***Revolutionary Communist Party – PCR
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Military Intervention in Rio de Janeiro Increases Violence and Illegal Drug Trade

The history of Brazil is rich in examples of intervention by the military to defend the interests of the bourgeoisie and foreign capital and to repress the workers and the poor people. This was the case in 1964, when President João Goulart was deposed in order to prevent a 100% increase in the minimum wage, land reform and the law of remitting profits abroad and establishing a bloodthirsty dictatorship.

In 1988, the Army invaded the Companhia Siderúrgica Nacional (CSN), the national mining company, to prohibit a just strike of workers struggling for better wages. The result was the Massacre of Volta Redonda on November 9, with 31 wounded and the death of three workers: Carlos Augusto Barroso, 19, Valmir Freitas Monteiro, 22, and William Fernandes Leite, 23 years old.

In 2016, the Armed Forces gave the green light to corrupt members of congress, who approved the labor reform that eliminated several workers' rights, tore up the Constitution and impeached President Dilma Rousseff, elected by 54 million people, and replaced her with Michel Temer.

Now, the Army is stepping in to save the government of a coup president rejected by more than 70 percent of the Brazilian people and denounced by the Attorney General's Office (PGR) as the head of a gang that stole more than R\$ (reales) 587 million (1 Brazilian real is about \$0.30 U.S. – *translator's note*) from the public coffers.¹

The pretext for intervention is that Rio de Janeiro is unmanageable, and that violence has taken over the state.

However, according to the 11th Public Security Yearbook of 2017, produced by the Brazilian Forum of Public Security, Rio de Janeiro is the tenth most violent state in the country. The first is

¹ <http://averdade.org.br/>

Sergipe, with 64 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants; the second is Rio Grande do Norte, with 56.9 deaths; the third, Alagoas (55.9); Pará is the fourth (50.9); Amapá, the fifth (49.6); the sixth is Pernambuco (47.6); Bahia is the seventh (46.5); the eighth is Goiás (43.8); Ceará is the ninth with 39.8 deaths for every 100 thousand inhabitants and Rio de Janeiro, the 10th, with 37.6 deaths. That is, if that were really the reason, nine other states should also be subjected to military intervention.²

Nor is it true that this year's Carnival in Rio was the most violent. According to Joana Monteiro of the Public Security Institute of Rio de Janeiro (ISP), the Carnival of 2018 had fewer incidents than in previous years. The number of incidents this year was 5,865, close to that of last year, with 5,773, and was lower than in 2016, when there were 9,016 incidents and lower than 2015: with 9,062 incidents. Cell phone theft also dropped, from 478 in 2017 to 336 in 2018. Incidentally, even the Federal Comptroller, Army General Walter Braga Netto, told the press on February 16 that the situation in Rio is not as bad as it sounds: "It's a lot of media," he said.

However, the mainstream media of the bourgeoisie hid this information and sought to spread panic among the population.

The illegal drug trade and the bankers

Those who defend the military intervention still spread the lie that Rio de Janeiro is the center of drug trafficking and organized crime in Brazil.

Today, the largest and most powerful criminal organization in the country is the so-called First Command of the Capital (PCC), which was formed and grew and is still based in São Paulo, where it controls the prisons and gives orders to carry out murders and rebellions throughout the country. The Red Command (CV), based in Rio, is the second largest organization of organized crime, but it has diminished its strength and lost influence to the PCC.

There is more: the city of São Paulo is the center of drug trafficking in Brazil. Consider the report of the Spanish newspaper *El País*, dated September 5, 2017, "São Paulo is the nerve center of international cocaine trafficking". In the article, the newspaper reports that last year the Federal Police seized six tons of narcotics in the port of Santos and arrested 73 people, many of them linked to

² <http://www.forumseguranca.org.br>

the PCC. The newspaper said: “It is the richest Brazilian state, in which powerful traffickers, many of them residents of the most expensive neighborhoods of São Paulo, control the flow of tons of drugs, mainly cocaine, that go to Europe.” Still according to *El Pais*, the Federal Police officers involved in the operation did not want to talk “about the involvement of large business owners or public figures with international drug trafficking.”

That is the question. It is hypocritical to talk about fighting against violence and crime without confronting the big capitalists and bankers who profit from the drug trafficking. A survey carried out by “Consultoria Legislativa”, a part of the Chamber of Deputies, points out that drug trafficking accounts for R\$ 15.5 billion per year in Brazil. According to the study, marijuana accounts for R\$ 6.68 billion; cocaine, R\$ 4.69 billion; crack, R\$ 2.95 billion and ecstasy, R\$ 1.189 billion. On a world scale, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the drug business makes \$ 870 billion.

Is this large quantity of money stored in mattresses in the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro or is this traffic in a generous partnership with the financial system, more precisely with the three largest private banks in the country, which together profited from no less than R\$ 47 billion last year?

In fact, the money raised by drug trafficking is laundered by private banks, deposited in large business accounts as if it was the result of legal business and sent legally out of the country. However, the Ministry of Finance, headed by the banker Henrique Meirelles, and the Central Bank, chaired by Ilan Goldfajn, one of the owners of the Itaú bank, neither see nor do anything to prevent money laundering from drug trafficking or from organized crime. The reason is simple: this dirty money increases their fantastic profits.

Actually, the involvement of large business owners is hidden both by the bourgeois media and the governments, banks and judiciary. On November 24, 2013, the Federal Police seized a helicopter with 450 kilograms of cocaine base paste belonging to the state deputy of Minas Gerais Gustavo Perrella, son of Senator Zezé Perrella (PMDB), both friends of Senator Aécio Neves (PSDB). Until today, no one has been punished in the case that became known as the “powder helicopter.”

But while the banks and companies that profit from drug trafficking are protected, petty traffickers are treated by the bourgeois media as “big traffic bosses and dangerous bandits.”

The failure of the Army operations

Thus, without confronting the true causes of the increase in drug trafficking and crime, or its links with financial capital, the intervention of the Army in Rio de Janeiro will fail as did the *Garantia da Lei e Ordem* (Guarantee of Law and Order, GLO) operations. Proof of this is that, since 2010, when then President Luiz Inacio (Lula) da Silva decided jointly with Governor Sergio Cabral that Army troops would occupy the Morro do Alemão, 17 operations of the GLO were carried out in the State. These operations cost the public coffers billions of reales and, as evidenced by the current decree of military intervention, they did not end the violence and trafficking in Rio. If this money, R\$ 2.4 billion, had been invested in education, sports and culture for the poor or in job creation (in the last three years, from 2014 to 2017, the number of unemployed in Rio increased by 157%), perhaps the result would be much more fruitful for the people of Rio.

The army knows that military intervention will not solve the problem of violence and drug trafficking. In June of last year, in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, General Eduardo Villas Bôas, the army commander, declared that the use of the armed forces in public security actions is “exhausting, dangerous and ineffective”



and that “we do not like this kind of job, we do not like it. “ Why, then, did they decide to accept the “sacrifice”?

First, to save Temer and the corrupt government that they helped put into the Planalto Palace. In fact, the Temer Government is responsible for the highest unemployment in recent decades – 12.7 million unemployed and 26.4 million underemployed, according to IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) data – it is mired in the sea of mud of corruption, and rejected by almost all of the Brazilian people.

Second, as a general explained when answering the question asked by the journalist Vinicius Torres Freire, of the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*: “What if the Army fails? – The state of siege remains, a true war, a failure of the nation” (*FSP*, February 18, 2018).

This is not very different from what General Antonio Hamilton Martins Mourão said on September 15, in a lecture at the Masonic Lodge in Brasília: “In my view, and here my view coincides with that of my comrades in the Army High Command, we are in a situation of what we might remember from the table of logarithms, ‘successive approximations’. Until the time comes when either institutions solve the political problem, by the action of the Judiciary, removing from public life those elements involved in all illicit activity, or else we must impose it.” (*A Verdade*, num. 199).

The fear of the truth

Meanwhile, the Brazilian Constitution is being violated little by little and the individual rights of the citizens are disrespected daily. Thus, on February 23, residents of the communities of Vila Kennedy, Correia and Vila Aliança, in the West Zone of Rio, when leaving their homes to go to work, had to show their ID and work permit to the soldiers who created a record on them without reason. The operation used 3,200 members of the Armed Forces, who, with their machine guns in hand, ostentatiously approached the residents, leaving 20,000 children out of school.

The bricklayer Edvan Silva Monteiro was one of the victims on whom the Army created a file. “I was just going to work with my lunchbox. The Army people said that they needed to see my documents. When I went back home to get them, I ended up being late for work and was fired by my boss.” The press was forbidden to

accompany the operation because, according to one soldier, this would intimidate them from carrying out their action.

There is more: after almost a month of military intervention in Rio de Janeiro, violence has grown instead of diminishing: shootings and deaths occur daily and only in the last two months the Military Police have killed 154 people.

If that were not enough, Councilor Marielle Franco of the PSOL (*Partido Socialismo e Liberdade* – Socialism and Freedom Party) opposed the military intervention, and she and her driver Anderson Gomes were executed in their car with nine shots on March 15. The murders occurred after Marielle denounced the fact that the 41st Military Police Battalion was “terrorizing and brutalizing the residents of the Favela do Acari” and the constant police crimes against the black youths of Rio.

The Association of Lawyers of Brazil (OAB – *Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil*) and the Public Defender also denounced the crimes and demanded respect for the rights of each human being. But the Eastern Military Command (*Comando Militar do Leste* – CML) defended the continuation of the intervention and demanded collective search warrants.

That is not new. Respecting human rights is not something that goes along with the tradition of the Armed Forces. Undoubtedly, in the 21 years that they were in power in Brazil, they tortured 20,000 people, arrested 50,000 and murdered hundreds of revolutionaries, workers, peasants and indigenous people. That is why General Vil-



las Bôas, the army commander, hastily asked that “the militaries must have a guarantee to act without risking a new Truth Commission.” Fear of what? Of the truth!

But against this advance of a police state and the growing intervention of the Army in the country, people are reacting, going into the streets and demanding the end of military intervention and the arrest of all the murderers of yesterday and today.

The struggle for a popular democracy

In reality, for the workers, for the poor, the democracy in Brazil is nothing more than a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and to deceive the people to keep them away from the revolution, because under capitalism it is the rich and their parties that have the means of communication, the presses, the millions to carry out their campaigns, bribe judges, parties and politicians and votes. Moreover, they impose more and more difficulties on the existence of the workers’ political parties, such as the barrier clause, the division of TV and radio time, and the division of party funds among the old parties. It is, therefore, only a democracy for a few hundred billionaires, that is, for the class of the exploiters.

In fact, only five men own half of the country’s wealth. These billionaires do not want democracy or freedom, because to continue accumulating wealth, they need to control the State, the Judiciary and the Armed Forces, which have modern fighter planes and powerful weapons to annihilate those who stand up against this rotten power.

It is necessary, therefore, to use all existing instruments and forms of struggle, not to spread illusions that this false democracy must be saved or that it is worth something, but to awaken those who still believe that democracy can exist under capitalist imperialism. It is necessary to unite the millions of the exploited against the minority of exploiters and unmask the undemocratic state of the bourgeoisie, making the masses conscious of the fact that we need to fight for a revolutionary government, a popular democracy that, in order to exist, requires a new economic system and the end of the unjust class society in which a minority of people, the bourgeoisie of the city and countryside, exploits all those who must sell their labor power to survive.

March, 2018

Burkina Faso

Revolutionary Communist Party of Volta – PCRV

Popular Struggles Are Developing in Our Country!

Since the popular insurrection of October 30-31, 2014, which expelled the dictator Blaise Compaoré from power, the popular struggles have not stopped developing. With the transitional regime established with the acquiescence of the imperialist powers to eliminate the rise of the insurrectional movement, the political parties of the bourgeoisie and the radical, reformist petty bourgeoisie and other opportunist organizations of civil society, rose up against the popular struggles, denounced the virulence of these struggles and street demonstrations, and even incited the authorities to repress the popular movement.

However, the dynamics of development of the movement continued with the victorious resistance to the counter-revolutionary coup of September 2015 that pushed the neocolonial People's Movement for Progress (MPP) and its allies into power. This power has the task of carrying out the plans of international imperialism, particularly French imperialism, to plunder the national wealth, and to use Burkina Faso as a platform for military intervention in West Africa, under the pretext of fighting against terrorism.

What is the situation of these struggles? What is their profound meaning? How is the bourgeois power of the MPP and its allies responding to these struggles? What attitude should the working class, the people and the popular youth take?

The Revolutionary Communist Party of Volta (PCRV) is responding to these questions by taking up its role as a vanguard party faced with the revolutionary situation unfolding in our country.

Briefly, the situation of the popular struggles in our country in the recent period

Since the coming to power of the neocolonial MPP in November 2015, many and various forms of struggle have been carried out by the popular masses through their respective organizations, both in the cities and in the countryside. Here is a brief, non-exhaustive look at those struggles:

* Strikes, sit-ins, marches of workers of the public sector, organized in their unions to obtain their protest demands; respect of the agreements made with the government; against the abuse of authority of the upper hierarchies; against the mafia management of public goods.

* Struggles by private sector workers against the restrictions on union freedoms; against the increase in taxes; against the abusive dismissals and unjust provisions of the Labor Code; against abuses of all kinds, etc.

* many popular demonstrations, spontaneous or through coalitions in the countryside and urban centers over real estate, housing, access to essential socio-economic infrastructure, leases, etc.

* the miners in different parts of the country, against the looting of the mines by the big companies, and for access and control by the people of the natural wealth of the country.

* actions of the “Kolweogos” (self-defense organizations) to protest against the arrest and prosecution of their members, detentions that are in fact directed against local self-defense.

Thousands and thousands of people have mobilized to force the government to take their concerns and problems into account. Between June 2016 and February 2018, the following struggles may be noted, among others:

* The SYNATEL (National Telecommunications Union): in September 2016. Protest against the negligence of management, for the improvement of working conditions, and more justice for the workers in their denunciation of the flight of capital to the National Office of Telecommunications (ONATEL). Sit-down strike.

* SYNATIC (National Union of Information and Culture Worker), October 2016. Support for the platform of demands of the workers of information and culture. Strikes and sit-ins in defense of freedom of the press.

* SINTSHA (Union of Workers of Human and Animal Health): strikes, marches and sit-ins in 2016, 2017 and 2018 for the fulfillment of the platform of demands and denounce the refusal of the Government to negotiate.

* SYNTAS (Union of Social Action Workers): a series of strikes and sit-ins in 2017 for better working conditions and higher salaries.

* The unions of Education and Research Workers (primary, secondary and university education) have carried out great struggles

for better working conditions, specifically of infrastructure and equipment, the re-evaluation of the status of teachers and researchers, and to improve the conditions of the baccalaureate. These struggles were very widespread in January 2018 throughout the national territory, despite the repression of the authorities and the attempts to stigmatize and isolate the teachers. However, their legitimate struggles were widely supported by the students and graduates as well as their families. The government was forced to retreat and yield to a large part of the demands of a coalition of unions of the National Education sector.

* SNAID (National Union of Tax Collectors). Strikes, marches for demands over working conditions, specific financial advantages (common funds, performance bonuses).

* FNBPB (National Federation of Bakeries and Confectioners of Burkina Faso). Strikes demanding the signing of a contract, and protesting against the revision of union freedoms and for the protection of union delegates and other personnel.

* SATB (Independent Union of Finance Officers). Demands for a salary increase (common funds) and over labor conditions.

* SYNAS (National Union of Officials of the Ministry of Sports), demands over their standard of living and work.

* SYNACIT (Union of Labor Controllers and Inspectors) Demands over work premises and safety.

* SYNPTIC (Union of Professionals of Computer and Information Technology). Demands for a career program.

* UCRB (Union of Drivers of Burkina Faso, affiliated with the Trade Union Confederation of Burkina Faso). Protests against the increase in robberies and fraudulent taxes on the highways, and for the extension of the agreement of the transport sector in February and August 2017. They also denounced the repression against the drivers who had criticized the excessive rates.

* The coordination of the Committees of the General Confederation of Labor of Burkina Faso (CGT-B), on strike demanding labor improvements and for a Statute.

* SYTTPBHA (Union of Workers of the Public Sector, Construction, Hydraulics and Similar Workers): Struggles at many points and in the Ministry of Infrastructure, denouncing the poor working conditions and the absence of management (opaque management) of the ministry.

* SYNAGRH (National Union of Human Resources Administrators of the Public Administration): A whole series of strikes and sit-ins in defense of their demands.

About 200 police officers demonstrated in April 2017 in Ouagadougou to denounce the “opaque management” of security contracts of private companies.

* SYNTRAGMH (National Union of Geology, Mines and Hydrocarbons) has carried out important struggles through its sections in the mines, against the savage exploitation of workers by the multinationals with the blessing of the neocolonial State.

The deep meaning of the popular struggles that are developing in our country

As can be seen, these struggles are taking up the following concerns of the popular masses:

- Improvement of living and working conditions.
- Impunity for blood crimes and economic crimes.
- Security of the people and their property.
- Rational regulation of the territory.
- The problem of real estate and settlement.
- Sacking of the natural wealth of our country.
- Control by the people of that wealth

These struggles have shaken up all the popular social classes, both in the cities and in the countryside: workers, semi-proletarians, peasants, urban petty bourgeoisie. The struggles have taken various forms: sit-ins, strikes, mass demonstrations, street and highway bar-



ricades, etc. The organization of these struggles has been through unions, associations and other coalitions up to initiatives of the “Soviet” (workers’ councils) type in the countryside.

These struggles must be analyzed taking into account the following considerations:

- The spirit of popular insurrection that remains alive in the minds of the popular masses. The combativeness, consciousness and their organizational reflection are being increasingly developed since the experience of the popular insurrection of October 2014, and the victorious resistance to the counter-revolutionary coup of General Gilbert Diendere in September 2015.

The increase in consciousness has gone beyond the framework of economic struggles. It has a political and anti-imperialist content that is being affirmed and growing. The demand for a real change is continuing because the insurrection was neutralized by the coup d'état of the Presidential Security Regiment of Lieutenant-Colonel Zida, supported by the bourgeois parties and organizations of civil society controlled by imperialism, especially French imperialism. Our people are denouncing the domination of our country by imperialism, particularly French imperialism. They are demanding national independence. They are denouncing the presence of foreign troops on our territory, as well as the currency, the CFA franc, as an instrument of economic domination. Our people are fighting for national sovereignty over the country's natural resources.

As during the Transition, our working class and people do not trust the power of the MPP whose main leaders were pillars for 30 years of the repressive and looting authority, from the National Council of the “Revolution” to the Fourth Republic of Blaise Compaoré through the Popular Front. They are promoters of a bourgeois state that defends the interests of imperialism, mainly French imperialism, and the neocolonial bourgeoisie. This is the reason why they have been unable to take action about any of the basic problems of insurrection. Their main objective is to eliminate the popular and revolutionary movement that is developing and that threatens the foundations of the neocolonial system in our country.

The revolutionary crisis is deepening from day to day; it is political. The power of the MPP and its allies has various conflicts, open or concealed, among the main leaders of the MPP at the level of certain main parties of the Alliance of the Presidential Majority (UNIR / PS, PAREN, among others). The same thing is happening

in the reactionary bourgeois opposition that has coalesced within the CFEOP (head the political opposition), and with the shake-ups within the UPC (Union for Change) which is its main force. The CDP of the regime that was overthrown by the popular insurrection is trying to rebuild itself in the midst of the struggles for influence among the different clans that make it up.

The Defense and Security forces are being undermined by the crisis as evidenced by the multiple restructuring at the level of commanders of the armed forces and the rupture between the troops and the top hierarchy. The protest movements are multiplying in the National Police with numerous financial scandals revealed in research reports, and by the growing discontent among the agents over the degradation of their living and working conditions. The soldiers and police expelled for their participation in the revolts of 2011, as well as the retired gendarmes are also expressing their discontent.

In the economic field, the situation is catastrophic. The people are gripped by poverty and misery, aggravated by the endemic unemployment, above all among young people. The economic machinery is moving at a slow pace, the PNDES (National Economic and Social Development Program) is not the solution nor are the Structural Adjustment Programs (PASD), the Strategic Framework of the Fight Against Poverty (CLSP) or the Strategy of Accelerated Growth and Durable Development (SCSDD), all programs based on economic liberalism advocated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)



How has the power of the MPP and its allies responded to the development of the popular movement?

The Power and its cronies take different attitudes towards the popular struggles:

* Favoritism towards certain social categories. In order to broaden its social base, it acceded to the demands of the upper sector of the intellectual petty bourgeoisie, in order to obtain its support, or at least a certain neutrality. This is the case, for example, with the union of magistrates, professors and researchers, and to some extent, the unions of the Ministry of Economy, Finance and Development (Finance, Treasury, Customs, Taxes and Inheritance with a common fund).

* Repression against the rest. Such was the case of struggles on the health front, transport, in the manufacturing and extraction industry, “orpillage”¹, local self-defense initiatives (the Kolweogo), etc. Against these struggles, the neocolonial power organized a media lynching, sent the forces of repression that struck, gassed and arrested the citizens, etc. They even caused deaths, as was the case in Tialgo, Sanguié province; the complicity of the gendarmes in the clashes among populations and self-defense groups is evident.

On July 29, 2017, the Union of Trade Union Action, which groups together six trade union federations and the independent unions in the country, organized a march and rallies to denounce the lay-off of workers, of which some 1,500 people have been victims since 2014.

The Union of Trade Union Action has denounced the fact that in recent years violations of the labor code have multiplied in the country, throwing hundreds of workers and dozens of union delegates into the street. Neither the decision against this by the Labor Inspectorate and the State Council has prevented the bosses from firing or refusing to reinstate the improperly fired workers.

The Union of Trade Union Action has denounced the fact that the authorities who have the responsibility to protect the workers are regularly obliging to the bosses. “The usual pretext is that the law does not provide for punishment for the boss who does not respect the labor legislation.” (Observateur Paalga num. 9495, July 31, 2017).

¹ Gold panning

Thus, the law guarantees the impunity of the bosses, the bourgeoisie. That is, they have their hands free to repress the workers. The ultimate goal is to weaken the trade union movement, that is, to eliminate it, because the trade union movement in our country is, according to the capitalist bosses, too strong. The precariousness of employment and the development of job placement offices, as well as contracts of limited duration, are included in this context.

What must the working class and the rest of the people do?

Our working class and people have no illusions about the new holders of power. That is why they refuse to agree to a social truce, convinced that nothing good can be expected. Our people stand on the barricades of the class struggle against the impunity of blood crimes and economic crimes.

The Revolutionary Communist Party of Volta (PCRV) strongly supports the popular, many-sided struggles, which are being broadened and intensified in all economic and social sectors. We call upon the different sectors of the people to:

- * strengthen their respective organizations of struggle and create others.

- * be inspired by their own experience to improve their forms of struggle and begin new ones.

- * avoid falling into corporatism, the source of division of the workers and the weakening of the organizations of struggle. To link their struggle with that of the people for emancipation.

- * work for the unity of the fighting forces, to achieve more important victories.

- * Join with the PCRV to carry out the National Democratic and Popular Revolution, through the armed general insurrection to expel French imperialism and its local allies; to form a Provisional Revolutionary Government, convene a Constituent Assembly and establish a Modern Democratic Republic to implement a minimum program of transition to scientific socialism.

**Forward to Unity around the PCRV,
the Party of Revolutionary Action!
Forward to the Modern Democratic Republic!
Bread and Freedom for the People!**

Colombia

Communist Party of Colombia (Marxist-Leninist) – PCC(ML)

Something Smells Rotten

This is what is being discussed daily in Colombia in the midst of a presidential campaign characterized by high media coverage, the reduced public debate about the different political proposals, the Machiavellian buying of votes and offices, the large investments, cronyism and the systematic blocking of the participation by democratic and left forces in the different scenarios of the campaign.

In addition, the manipulation, lies and terror seen in the desperate propaganda display of the oligarchy and its parties makes us aware that the illegality and illegitimacy that plagues these elections is quite profound.

Taking up the challenge of differentiating itself from the oligarchic proposals, principally of the right, the various democratic, progressive and leftist forces are participating in this campaign, bringing a hopeful message of change, pointing out that the country's great problems cannot be resolved without major changes in the structure and functioning of Colombian society, especially in its economic and political model.

Among the broad popular masses the consciousness is maturing that the bourgeoisie and imperialism are the ones really responsible for the great evils of the country and that the changes that are now widely demanded will not be possible without a broad political defeat of all those political parties, factions and leaders belonging to the ruling classes, as well as those collaborationist forces and leaders whose mission is to facilitate the work of the regime and the bourgeois state.

In this exercise of political demarcation, an important work of unmasking is being carried out of populism as a bourgeois orientation and current at times of political crisis such as the one the country is suffering through at the moment.

The present article includes guidelines that we wish to share with the readers of the journal *Unity and Struggle* about how we communists evaluate this phenomenon in the country and in Latin America.

Populism is a policy without precedence

The nefarious effects that the neoliberal prescriptions have had in Latin America are innumerable. The free trade treaties and agreements, privatizations, the elimination of subsidies, labor outsourcing and the increasing conversion and specialization of these countries into exporters of raw materials, mainly oil, coal, gold and other minerals, continue creating and sharpening the problems of unemployment, poverty, high rates of mortality and illiteracy that have characterized Colombia and other Latin American countries. In times of crisis and economic stagnation, the neoliberal prescriptions continue to be imposed, seeking the maximum profit for the large monopolies and international banking.

The peculiar thing is that the measures of force, which speak of an accelerated tendency of hardening of the States, are accompanied at the moment by a series of ideological and political methods that are trying to get the masses and their various social and political organizations to support and accept these neoliberal prescriptions as a salvation for their serious problems.

But not everything is rosy, as the political and mass discontent is growing and all those policies, including populism, with which the bourgeoisie and its collaborators seek to deceive the masses, are being clarified and unmasked in all their content and class character.

The populists are politicians (or political forces) bold enough to make the broad masses see them as passionate spokespersons for their needs, as experts in describing them in detail and providing pragmatic, immediate solutions to the problems of a country without ever pointing to the structural causes of the poverty and misery of the people, or to the backwardness of the country.

Their governments focus on reforms to try to carry out the ideals of the petty bourgeoisie of the city and those of the peasants of a better life in the countryside. They pay attention to the bourgeois and petty bourgeois sectors, claiming that they can rise on the capitalist scale.

They take care to maintain the forms or “good relations” with the proletariat in order to deceive them, postponing their demands in order to try to prevent any effect on the profit rate of the owners of capital (or of the capitalist sector that they represent). But above all they try to dominate, weaken or discredit the trade unions and other organizations of the workers in order to hinder the proletarian

struggles and, in any case, they try to give first place to other social sectors or organizations within which the proletariat must be mixed in order not to let it appear as a class. They ceaselessly persecute the revolutionary parties.

Naturally, **populism catches people more easily in times of acute crisis**, when the scourges of capitalism are more in evidence, inter-bourgeois contradictions are growing and it is easier to represent certain traditional bourgeois political forces and certain sectors of the ruling classes as the causes of the sufferings of the people and the flaws of a country or nation.

This is a result of the political crisis of the right-wing forces. It has characteristic aspects: the very low acceptance of certain representative institutions of the bourgeois state, the most outstanding traditional leaders are so exposed and discredited that they are unable to be the social or political representatives of their class, it is a situation preceded by acute organizational collapse and great electoral bankruptcy of the bourgeois political parties.

But it is no less true and important that it emerges when a certain level of organization, unity and struggle of the workers, peasants and popular strata is being developed, threatening the bourgeoisie and imperialism.

The populist governments, as with the social-democratic governments, represent new tactics for the bourgeoisie and imperialism



“I swear that the terrorists are the FARC and the ELN.”
The two figures are labeled “Oligarchy” and “Paramilitaries”

in different parts of our America and the Caribbean.

These governments use demagoguery about the openly populist path that is mixed with nationalist messages or false nationalism. They not only use demagoguery the way the traditional bourgeois parties do, as is happening now in Colombia with President Juan Manuel Santos. He is a demagogue who uses some populist formulations about the issue of peace to try to save himself from the fire caused by eight years of the government of Alvaro Uribe, and to maneuver as he is trapped by the economic, social, humanitarian and environmental crisis and its inevitable political repercussion.

The electoral campaign that is currently taking place in Colombia reminds us of caudillos [authoritarian leaders – *translator's note*] such as Juan Domingo Peron, elected president on three occasions, Carlos Saul Menem and Nestor Kirchner in Argentina, each one applying the policies demanded for this country at his time by the big financial octopuses.

The bourgeois candidates who are currently contesting the presidency of the Republic also remind us of dictators such as General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla who, after a coup d'état against Laureano Gomez, was the Chief of State of Colombia from June 13, 1953, to May 10, 1957. His government was characterized by the developing of major infrastructure works and it was imposed and used by the bourgeoisie to contain the popular armed outbreak (“The Violence”) after the murder of Jorge Eliecer Gaitan. Rojas Pinilla, after being overthrown, went into exile and returned to political life opposing the “national front,” supported by his accomplishments of his government in favor of sectors of the people and creating his Popular National Alliance movement, ANAPO, which still exists as part of the “democratic left” and has achieved important mayoralties such as that of Bogota.

Now we have the follower of the ex-president and today senator Alvaro Uribe, who still manages to have support among some people for his style and exercise of political leadership. He still has sympathy among popular sectors very affected by misery and the consequences of the armed conflict, those who were attracted by his demagoguery about well-being and peace. His presentation of himself as outside politics and parties has served to strengthen the neoliberalism imposed by imperialism and the national monopolies; he used the “community councils” in remote places where no president was ever seen to appear simple and accessible with micro management.

This also included the spreading of a story about his supposedly exceptional work capacity; he criticized the “ostentation” of his predecessors and avoided lavish meetings with the national and foreign oligarchs who supported him.

Caudillismo is another feature of certain bourgeois or petty-bourgeois rulers and politicians of an authoritarian (sometimes fascist) nature, whether of civilian or military origin, but not necessarily associated with populism.

These caudillos appear at critical moments for the countries and the dominant bourgeois parties. Normally they present themselves as “independent” of the bourgeois establishment or of this or that political party. They display great authority and electoral prestige or popularity (real or fabricated) in order to try to isolate their rivals. By championing the economic and social demands of the proletariat and the popular strata, they act viciously against the revolutionaries and especially against the communists, while continuing to resort to open attacks against the proletariat as a class, making use of the propaganda apparatus and all the force of the repressive institutions of the State. Also, characteristic of their politics, they enhance the role of the middle strata of the people by spreading the petty-bourgeois spirit that supports capitalism at its roots. It is not surprising that the caudillos make frequent use of religious figures or symbols that are greatly admired by the popular masses to strengthen the exaggeration of their real or supposed personal qualities.

There is much to learn from the lessons of the practice of the Colombian liberal caudillo, Jorge Eliecer Gaitan, assassinated by the pro-imperialist oligarchy on April 9, 1948, leading to the armed conflict that continues to this day.

The politics of the populist governments internally target the most discredited part of the oligarchy, so that on this basis it works for the rise of another sector of capital and the pacification of the class struggle through creating false economic and social expectations. These cannot be realized due to their faithfulness to the commitments to the international agencies of imperialism and the international treaties signed by previous governments. They also tend to impose changes in the political system and often conceal the lack of democracy.

They preach internal peace that is part of the pacification of the class struggle and includes the spreading of fear of the inevitable armed popular insurrection that will put an end to the pro-

imperialist bourgeois power that is dominant in all Latin American and Caribbean countries except for Cuba. They put into doubt the recognition of the revolutionary movement in arms and struggle to avoid its extension to a continental level.

At the international level, the populist government appears to be independent, but in fact it seeks to conceal its submission, redefining it with tactics such as the signing of agreements with imperialist and multinational powers with which their predecessors did not deal, but in essence they leave their commitments to Yankee imperialism intact.

The fusion between populism and caudillismo is very dangerous for the revolutionary process.

The populist caudillos, when they pose as leftists and have the economic resources to carry out reforms manage to fool the masses, to radicalize them around their own person and making them despise their organization and confidence in their own strength.

This situation arouses sympathy that they use to attack the revolutionaries who are waging the political ideological struggle against their theses and practice, or foster tactics of not clashing with them, affecting their growth as an independent force that must create the revolutionary reserves for the assault on the power.

At the same time, the populist caudillos are very vulnerable because the capitalist crisis affects them economically and their measures for the masses are beginning to diminish, their boasted projects are falling and they are forced to take up the traditional bourgeois adjustment policies to get out of the crisis that is falling harshly on the shoulders of the people.

Distinct from populism, a democratic and revolutionary



current exists and is developing in our Latin America and the Caribbean. It is a social and political force of the masses; it is not only able to win tactical economic, social and political gains; it is also accumulating forces to raise their objectives in the direction of the seizing and exercise of political power.

This current has achieved important gains, such as some national and local governments of various scopes and importance.

The so-called alternative governments (or those presented as such) have been losing the support of their constituents due to the loss of direction and lack of definition in favor of the people and the national interests, or because their overtly reformist ideas clash with the interest of the people in seeing structural changes and anti-capitalist positions. Because the masses are tired of continuing to see the same owners of land and capital in economic power while their own situation does not change substantially, or the crisis aggravates it severely. Apparently, these times are better suited to those who include the ideas such as revolution and socialism even if they are combined with something that blocks them: class conciliation and pacifism.

We communists must work in unity of action with the other revolutionaries, while maintaining our ideological and political independence, in providing our parties and organizations with clear class content. To fight so as not to lose the initiative, so as not to tail the rise of the popular struggles, striving to ensure that the proletarian class puts its power into play and is at the head of the struggles without taking away the role of the other popular sectors.

This demands the unmasking of the governments of the caudillos and the populist tactics since they leave the people as spectators and ignore them as subjects of social change, trying to distance them from their role of makers of history, from their revolutionary role.

We will support the genuine alternative governments, national and local, but without reducing the progressive, democratic, left and revolutionary current to their actions and results; for us the life of this current is in the workers', peasants' and popular actions.

Conclusion: The peoples of the subcontinent, called on to triumph over imperialism and reaction, need the revolutionaries to fulfill out our task of guiding them in purging the democratic and revolutionary current of the forces hostile to the revolutionary struggle, opposed to the overthrow of the pro-imperialist bourgeois-

sie and the defeat of fascism.

We must dialogue with the masses to persuade them about their tasks in this field of ideological struggle, in the defeat of populism and caudillismo, of social democracy and opportunism of all stripes.

Central Executive Committee
Communist Party of Colombia Marxist-Leninist
Colombia, April 5, 2018

Denmark

Workers' Communist Party of Denmark – APK

By Dorte Grenaa

The Working Class and Labour Aristocracy in Denmark Today

Reformists and revisionists agree with the bourgeoisie and well-paid bourgeois scientists that the working class is heading for extinction, and that it has outplayed its historical role in a complex modern society.

Social democrats have persistently claimed that classes, class society and class struggle would disappear with the so-called 'state of general welfare' as seen in the Nordic countries. Capitalism could be made human and almost social just following the line of class collaboration and reformism.

According to the widespread theory of the 'middle class society,' the working class will gradually become smaller and be educated and transformed into a growing middle class that will be the most important social force. According to this theory, the population of a given society is often described as one large middle class, except for some marginalised groups of rich and poor at each end of the scale.

Another version is the idea that the working class has been incorporated into one large group of wage earners and has common class interests with employed leaders and high ranking functionaries.

At the present juncture of acute class contradictions, some reformists have rediscovered the working class – but as a class with new characteristics, that has shrunk to a minority of the working population, in Denmark 47 percent. They have reduced the working class to comprise only people employed as skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled workers, while everyone thrown out of the labour market as unemployed – or as a consequence of neoliberal 'reforms' - now supposedly belongs to another class – the underclass – comprising 20 percent of the population.

In fact the working class still is the largest and most important class force. But the working class of today is – due to objective developments – much more complexly composed and with a wider

range of living conditions. We must study these changes in order to develop our politics and tactics as the communist party of the working class.

The working class and ‘neoliberal’ imperialism

The division of labour in ‘neoliberal’ imperialism and its ‘globalisation’ has meant a higher level of education of both skilled and semi-skilled workers in the high-tech part of production that is left in Denmark.

The technological development of the means of production with its increased digitalization and industrial robots has made many jobs outdated and redundant and created a number of new labour functions, especially consisting in supervision of production, which demand other capacities than before.

At this time we see a massive demand from the bourgeoisie for changes in the educational system through a series of reforms, streamlined to fit the needs of the corporations.

The working class itself and its various groups and strata are thus differently composed from some years ago. We also notice increasing differences between the living and working conditions and wages of these different groups and strata. The divide-and-rule policy of the capitalists has meant paper fortunes for some in the shape of pension systems, home ownership and tax benefits, while others have lost their income, pension and home with the reforms of the unemployment system and others.

The semi-skilled and unskilled workers have been and remain the most class conscious group. It is probably the group that has changed most dramatically during the neoliberal European Union governments of Fogh Rasmussen, Thorning Schmidt and the present one of Lars Løkke Rasmussen. Several hundred thousand unskilled jobs have been moved to countries with greater super-profits, notably in Asia and Eastern Europe, or they have been solicited in the ‘open market’ of the EU to foreign subcontractors, bringing their own cheap labour.

More than a quarter of all semi-skilled and unskilled jobs have disappeared since 2000. In industry alone these account for more than half of the semi-skilled and unskilled jobs. The massive unemployment caused has especially been felt among women workers.

The semi-skilled and unskilled workers are under heavy pressure by the social dumping of cheap labour by the European Union

and the tax-financed social dumping of the public sector in the shape of different workfare systems, where you work for the small social benefits you may receive.

More than one third of all industrial jobs of both skilled and unskilled workers have disappeared since 2000; this has been accelerated by the capitalist crises. Denmark has witnessed the biggest fall in industrial production of any European Union country within the country itself, with the exception of Ireland.

According to the employers and the bourgeoisie this has happened because Danish labour contracts, safety regulations and ‘high social benefits’ are harmful to their cost capabilities and competitiveness.

But the truth is that labour productivity has risen sharply, and at even higher rates since the crises of 2008. In recent years industrial companies have seen the highest increase. The level of productivity (the value produced per hour) is estimated by EuroStat at 425 Danish kroner an hour (approximately \$71 US) for industrial employees – one of the highest figures in the European Union.

Concerning the share of wages of the workers – that is the part of the value created that is spent on wages (the value of the special commodity labour) – new figures show that it is now less than its historical average. In the year 2000 it was at the lowest point since 1966. This also means that the surplus value – the part of the value created by the workers that is appropriated by the capitalists, their unpaid labour – has increased, both relatively and in absolute figures.

This testifies to the fact that the competitive ability of Danish industry is very good. We see a high level of exploitation of the



workers, high quality, big earnings and profits.

Today only a quarter of the working class is employed in industry and construction. Another quarter is employed in the public sector – taking care of the sick and elderly, as day care workers, etc. A third quarter is employed in trade and transport – as drivers, shop assistants, cleaners and so on, while the last quarter works in a number of smaller branches.

One out of every five persons employed is termed a ‘non-typical employee’. That means working in temporary and limited jobs, as substitutes, modern day labourers employed by the hour. They have fewer rights and often no pension. One out of four are working part time. The share of part time workers in retail trade is around 75 percent. More and more people cannot survive on one income alone and have to combine different jobs to make a living.

The working class is increasingly composed of people of different nationalities, languages, trade union organisations and traditions. The ‘open’ internal market of the European Union has induced the employers to engage in social dumping of cheaper labour force from the poorer EU countries. These are workers who are forced to seek employment away from their homeland and families. Today 9 percent of those employed in Danish firms are foreign nationals, mostly workers. In addition there are people on contract with foreign employers who are working in Denmark, and there also is a group illegally traded to the country, who have no rights at all.

While the number of workers from neighbouring countries like Sweden and Germany is decreasing, the largest new groups of workers, around half, come from Eastern Europe, especially from the Baltic Countries, Poland, Ukraine and Romania. Large public construction projects, as for instance metro, railways and bridges, have only a few Danish workers.

Foreign workers make up half of those working as cleaners and a quarter of the cleaning industry. They make up one out of four in hotel and service and one out of five in agriculture, slaughterhouses and restaurants. Trade and transport has the largest number of foreign employees, while industry employs half of this number. Health service is the fastest growing business in terms of foreign workers.

A growing number work as part of a multinational labour force employed in Danish global companies such as Maersk, Arla or Carlsberg that are spread over many countries, or in a foreign corporate group placed in Denmark. This underlines the necessity of

the workers' international struggle and solidarity.

The conglomerate ISS World with more than half a million employees in 51 countries is the fourth largest employer in the world, only surpassed by Wal-Mart, Group Four Securicor (G4S) and Tesco, ahead of companies such as McDonald's and Siemens.

A process of mass ejection from the labour market has been going on throughout the economic crises, with the reduction of social security and a whole series of reactionary neoliberal reforms – prominently among these unemployment security and benefits. This affects among others people who are dependent on social security schemes, many who are ill or in poor health. A number of people are kicked or left out of these, with no income at all, and officially have to be supported by a partner.

This process also makes the stratum outside or underneath the working class – traditionally called the lumpen proletariat (the proletarians in rags) – grow. They constitute a group of people surviving from one day to the next, outside or on the fringe of the labour market – including homeless people, the mentally ill, addicts, prostitutes and people without legal papers.

The working class constitutes the majority of the Danish population. Today it is more complex than ever before – both economically, in terms of education, socially and culturally. But there is one common feature of all working class people: They are part of the class that create social values; they are part of the class with an objective interest in revolutionary change and in building socialism.

Bourgeois ideology and the social roots of opportunism

The working class is the main force of the class struggle.

This is the objective side. The subjective side is how the working class and its party acts, struggles and develops. If it pursues the line of class struggle or a line of class collaboration. If it moves towards the revolution or away from it.

It is the struggle for the minds and the hearts of the working class and to provide the necessary theory to win the struggle for socialism.

Every day we are exposed to a flood of bourgeois propaganda, designed to make us think of anything other than to change the world. When we as a communist party speak about opportunism within the working class, we are talking about political currents pretending to have working-class, left or even revolutionary policies,

but in fact are not – like reformism, revisionism or Trotskyism. They may sound quite convincing, but their phrases and illusions about improving capitalism dissolve into hot air when they are put to the test of practice.

These opportunist currents are not the result of ignorance or naivety. Their purpose is to split the working class and prevent the unification of the revolutionary forces. They do not disappear and leave the stage, even though they are proven wrong all the time. On the contrary. The building of the communist party, the unification of the revolutionary forces and organising on a mass scale on the basis of the line of class struggle can only make progress by defeating the opportunist voices of defeat.

Opportunism has objective roots and stems from objective interests, bearing the characteristics of social strata outside the working class. The most important social bases of opportunism are two-fold – a special social stratum at the top of the working class, the so-called labour aristocracy, and the intelligentsia, primarily petty-bourgeois intellectuals.

In Denmark the labour aristocracy ranges from the heads of the reformist trade union and party bureaucracy and the managements of trade union related companies to ordinary trade union and party functionaries, technocrats and privileged shop stewards, including also some privileged workers.

More than one hundred years of social democratic reformism has made the labour aristocracy an institution, among others of the cooperative companies that originated from the labour movement, and gradually were transformed into the streamlined companies of today operating entirely on market premises.

The main Danish labour organisation – the social democratic trade union federation LO – has its own system of education for class collaboration, partly financed by contributions from the employers' unions.

During the last few decades we have seen a number of new so-called trade unions. They offer membership at a much lower price than the ordinary trade unions. They are the so-called 'yellow', splittist organisations such as the Christian Trade Union with 700 functionaries. These organisations do not sign any labour contracts with the employers and they have abandoned the right to strike. Their members work as scabs at times of conflict between the real trade unions and the employers and their organisations. The yellow

organisations count for four percent of the workers and employees, while the conventional reformist trade unions organise around 67 percent. This makes them among the highest ranking in the EU, although the level of organisation has actually decreased for a number of years.

The lives of the labour aristocrats are quite different from the lives of the trade union members who pay their salaries. Their lucrative wages, pensions and jobs differ sharply from the much lower paid labour of the trade union members, marked by attrition, job uncertainty and insecurity, terms of employment and work hours. They are not subjected to a constant pressure to raise productivity, or two percent yearly cutbacks as in the Danish public sector, or rationalisations, nor do they see their workplace outsourced, privatised or moved abroad.

You are not automatically transformed into a labour aristocrat by becoming a shop steward or having another position of trust from your co-workers. But the danger is obvious in the back-patting reformist trade union hierarchy. The process of corruption is an objective mechanism, characterised by material cash advantages or certain privileges enjoyed by the corrupted. Subjectively a trade union leader may at one moment be a labour aristocrat of the classic type and the next a person of class struggle – but unfortunately also the other way around, which is the tendency when a strong communist party does not exist. The higher the rank in the labour aristocracy, the more one is bourgeoisified.

In the long run even the most honest trade union leader is only able to resist the corruption of the labour aristocracy by the support of the communist party and the consistent line of class struggle. In the original revolutionary communist party in Denmark – DKP (1917-56) and its Marxist-Leninist successor DKP/ML (1978-97) – it was the rule that trade union and parliamentary leaders should be considered as party functionaries, paid by the party. They would deliver their bribe salary to the party and keep a sum equalling an ordinary worker's pay.

Back in 1892 Friedrich Engels spoke about an 'aristocracy inside the working class' in England, signifying a privileged minority of the workers, as contrasted to the great majority. This privileged minority originated as a result of the profits of Britain's colonial monopoly. Lenin broadened and clarified this analysis in the light of the emergence of imperialism, stressing that the imperialist bour-

geoisie in a number of countries is able to bribe a part of the best-off workers on the basis of imperialist super-profits.

Due to the special economic position of the labour aristocracy and its social position and influence, it emerges that the class interests of this social strata is connected to the preservation and survival of capitalist society.

The labour aristocracy is better able to defend the politics of class collaboration and thereby the interests of the bourgeoisie than the bourgeoisie itself. This makes this social stratum the most important class basis of the reformist and revisionist parties, the actual material and social basis of their ideology, theory and politics, along with petty bourgeois intellectuals.

It has always been an important principle for the Marxist-Leninists not to make appeals to this special stratum to uphold the demands of the working class or to nurture any illusions that they will fight for them to the end. Every struggle must be fought in spite of them – at times in direct confrontation, as many strikes and labour struggles and protest movements have experienced over and over again.

The labour aristocracy does not constitute a separate class, also not in imperialist countries like Denmark, where it is somewhat larger than in the countries exploited by imperialism. As a social stratum it relates to different social classes.

The strata of the labour aristocrats in Denmark themselves may also be subdivided

The main figures are the bourgeois politicians of the so-called workers' parties, the parliamentary reformist and revisionist organisations and the heads of the trade union leaderships and their consorts. This upper segment belongs to the monopoly bourgeoisie and includes the managers of the big pension and investment funds of the labour unions. The Danish ATP (workers' special pension) is the biggest pension fund in Europe with a value of one billion dollars, and is an important economic force in Danish society.

What once was created to protect the workers from social misery is now a business on purely capitalist terms. Recently the LO trade union leadership sold the insurance company of the trade unions, Alka, dating back to 1903, to corporate vultures for more than 1.35 billion dollars.

The top leadership of the two largest trade union federations

(one for workers in private companies and one for public employees) have for a long time prepared to amalgamate into one huge enterprise, expected to take place by 2019.

The top layer of the trade union leadership and labour aristocracy is a part of both the economic and political elite of today. Together with various bourgeois and social-democratic governments and employers' organisations, they are responsible for the implementation of the greater part of the neoliberal labour policy and social policy of the European Union and the subsequent reforms, which are endorsed in the main labour contracts by negotiations among the three parties – the state, the employers' organisations and the trade union federations.

The middle layer of labour aristocrats consist of the paid trade union leaders and functionaries at lower levels, the employees and functionaries of the administration of the unemployment funds, consultants and paid staffs of the so-called workers' parties. Their salaries and working conditions are also much better than those of the people they are supposed to represent.

The lowest but still privileged layer of labour aristocrats are paid shop stewards, groups of highly paid workers in certain key functions and workers who have been accorded leading functions in the implementation of the concrete work projects.

The characterisation of the labour aristocracy by Lenin in *Imperialism* as the 'fire extinguishers of the struggle of the working class' has been distorted by certain elements into a claim that the entire working class in the imperialist countries is bribed and bourgeoisified. Such radical sounding 'theories' are sheer left opportun-



ist nonsense. Their purpose is to pull the teeth out of the working class struggle and leave the workers by themselves to the reformists and revisionists.

The other main social basis of opportunism are the intellectuals, the intelligentsia. This is a social strata, not a class, outside of the working class and the petty bourgeoisie, but with ties to the different social classes in a given society and social system.

With the development of the productive forces and the increased demand for a better educated labour force, and with improved possibilities of education, this group has increased significantly.

Like the labour aristocracy, the intelligentsia as a social stratum may be subdivided into three main categories, according to their class affiliations.

A large part of the lowest layer of intellectuals is more and more proletarianized. This means that their life and working conditions increasingly resemble those of the working class in general, no matter whether they are privately or publicly employed. This also means that they are very harassed and have uncertain work conditions, low wages and attrition.

This is true of large professions like school and kindergarten teachers, nurses and others. During recent years public employees have waged strong struggles for their demands or have been locked out by their employers in the state apparatus, local regions and communities. This was the case with the lockout of the teachers and the closing of public schools in 2013, when a social democratic led government sent the teachers home and closed the schools. As this did not break the fighting spirit of the teachers, they passed legislation making the employers' demands the law. The public employers are the same as the (elected) politicians on different levels.

The lower ranks of the intellectuals – such as students in general – are close allies of the working class, and in times of acute class struggle many of them are won to the side of the workers.

The upper part of academic top officials, the highest echelons of the judicial and executive power, the CEOs of public enterprises – as for instance managers of hospitals and universities – are socially entwined with the bourgeoisie, with whom they share conditions. This upper quite swollen layer serves the interests of the ruling class unconditionally.

Between these two groups are several categories of people who

have not made it to the top of society, but who may one day be the right hand of the boss; the next have a time limited project employment, and the third be unemployed with a big debt. They struggle for career and position, a situation they share with parts of the petty bourgeoisie.

Due to their objective conditions of life and work the intelligentsia has no independent class position, but has some specific features making it susceptible to opportunism, and at times to waver between the main classes of capitalist society, the bourgeoisie and the working class.

This is true of its individualism and the fact that knowledge in capitalism is a private value, an asset in the opportunist competition for jobs and career, or else used as private property. This also means a certain susceptibility to illusions and an inclination towards the easy way.

Thus petty bourgeois intellectuals along with labour aristocrats may spread opportunist and reformist ideas and theories in the workers' movement, and indeed also in the communist party.

On the other hand, revolutionary intellectuals who join the working class and its cause are of great importance to the struggle of the proletariat and its party. The communist movement is and has been joined by many great revolutionary intellectuals and outstanding cultural figures who have used their creative powers to advance the working class struggle for socialism.

The communist party lives and fights in the midst of bourgeois society, at all times surrounded and attacked by furious anti-communist or anti-revolutionary propaganda and by the hostile activities of its enemies. It is a part of the existing society and is in touch with and affected by the social classes and strata of this society.

Therefore the question of the class composition of the party is so important, making it imperative to secure a decisive majority of workers in the ranks of the party.

April, 2018

Dominican Republic

Communist Party of Labor – PCT

A Necessary and Militantly Rigorous Question: Reform or Revolution?

The historical position of the Marxist-Leninists on that question is: both reform and revolution. It is not one or the other, but both; reform is subordinated to the revolution. But both.

From a perspective of communist militancy, the one is not opposed to the other, but the first in certain historical conditions, or situations, opens the road to the second, which is the main one.

This is a very old discussion, begun in the 19th century, at the end of the 1880s in the social democratic labor parties organized in the Second International in which Lenin, among others, spoke out in defense of the Marxist position; this still has manifestations in the communist and revolutionary movement.

The Second International (1889-1914) brought together a large number of parties that were able to mobilize hundreds of thousands of workers all over the world. When it was founded, Karl Marx was already dead and it was Frederick Engels's turn to guide those parties.

That organization grew in the heyday of capitalist, of its development into the imperialist phase, and the International's consequent struggles allowed the working class to win many demands, wage increases and labor laws that significantly improved their living conditions.

But the strength of the old social democratic labor parties, and the gains of the working class, fell into decline because of the problems of the capitalist system that would lead to the First World War. We must emphasize in this article that they entered into decline because of the theoretical and political positions assumed by some of the leaders of these parties in the face of the war.

In these circumstances, the Second International was declared bankrupt by Lenin and the communists of several countries, and after the triumph of the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia, the Communist International (Third Communist International) arose; from the experience of this revolution, the Bolshevik leader was forced to refute the positions of the ultra-left that were taken up by

several parties on question of tactics, such as the struggle for reforms, the use of bourgeois parliaments and the participation in the yellow unions.

The debate since the end of the 19th century

Eduard Bernstein, one of the most capable leaders of social democracy, had concluded in his work, *The Prerequisites for Socialism and the Tasks of Social Democracy* (1889) that, since the defeat of the Paris Commune in May 1871, and the boom of the capitalist economy since 1873, there had been no revolutions, and that the working class had greatly improved its living conditions. Thus there would be no need for the ideas of revolution of Marx and Engels, that is, the radical rupture with the system; and that it was possible to advance in the solution of the problems through gradual processes of reforms that would lead peacefully to socialism.

Lenin confronted these ideas from a Marxist position, insisting that the revolution and the seizure of power by the working class is the main issue in Marx; he does not deny that the struggle for reforms enters into the perspective of the working class and its parties to advance its realization. In a pamphlet entitled *Marxism and Revisionism*, written in 1908, he expressed that position, taking a stand in the debate proposed by the ideas of Eduard Bernstein.

Part of his book *What Is To Be Done?*, written in 1901-02, in an open debate with the Russian version of the ideas of Eduard Bernstein, when dealing with “Trade unionist politics and social-democratic politics”, puts forward the Marxist position on the relationship between reform and revolution. There he says what at that time was his understanding of the issue:

“Revolutionary Social-Democracy always included, and now includes, the fight for reforms as part of its activities. But it utilizes ‘economic’ agitation for the purpose of presenting to the government, not only demands for all sorts of measures, but also (and primarily) the demand that it cease to be an autocratic government. More, it considers it its duty to present this demand to the government, not on the basis of the economic struggle *alone*, but on the basis of all manifestations in general of public and political life. In a word, it subordinates the struggle for reforms, as the part to the whole, to the revolutionary struggle for liberty and for Socialism.”

In 1913, on the eve of the First World War and insisting on the debate, not only against the ideas of Eduard Bernstein, but against

those of other prominent leaders of the Second International, and the most important of these, Karl Kautsky, Lenin wrote a pamphlet entitled *Marxism and Reformism*, in which his position is even more explicit; He says:

“Unlike the anarchists, the Marxists recognize struggle for reforms, i.e., for measures that improve the conditions of the working people without destroying the power of the ruling class. At the same time, however, the Marxists wage a most resolute struggle against the reformists, who, directly or indirectly, restrict the aims and activities of the working class to the winning of reforms.”

That is, the struggle for reforms is one thing, which is absolutely necessary in the day-to-day struggle; another thing is reformism, which is an opportunist deviation expressed in making the struggle for reforms the ultimate goal, and not a way to accumulate forces with the perspective of the revolution.

According to Lenin, those who deny that dialectic are “anarchists”.

At this level of Lenin’s reflection, he could not analyze the experience of the October Revolution of 1917, which he would do and present years later, after its victory.

Lenin was not the only one to deal with the question of reform and revolution.

Rosa Luxemburg, one of the youngest leaders of the workers’ and socialist movement of that time, was prominent among those confronting the reformist thesis of Eduard Bernstein. *Reform or Revolution?* was the question in her book of the same title (1900).

Its essential purpose was to vindicate the Marxist theses on the necessity of the revolution to contribute to exposing the reformist ideas in social democracy, and the fact of her having placed the main emphasis on that purpose has been misunderstood by many revolutionaries as a rejection of the importance of taking on the struggle for reforms as part of the effort for the revolution.

It is not at all true that Rosa Luxemburg rejected the struggle for reforms as part of the revolutionary tasks for socialism of the social democratic workers’ parties. What she did was to rethink the approach towards reforms as an end in themselves and place them in the Marxist position, as a means to advance.

What was the answer to the question: reform or revolution? The following:

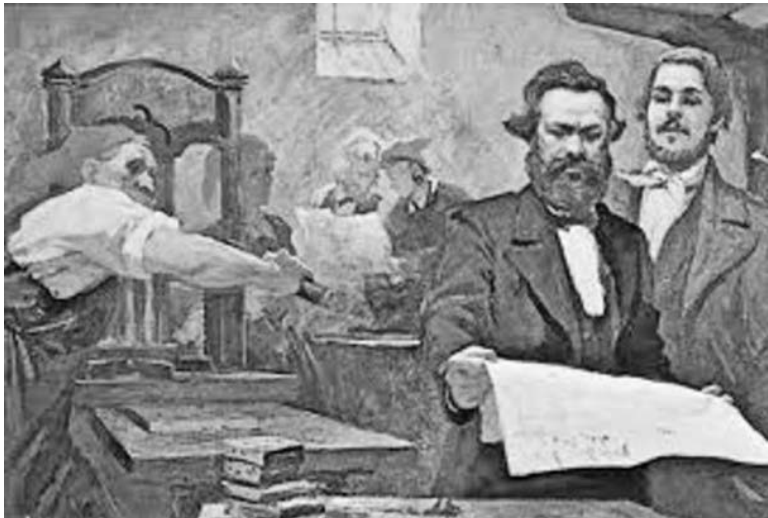
“The daily struggle for reforms, for the amelioration of the condition of the workers within the framework of the existing social order, and for democratic institutions, offers to the social democracy the only means of engaging in the proletarian class war and working in the direction of the final goal – the conquest of political power and the suppression of wage labor. Between social reforms and revolution there exists for the social democracy an indissoluble tie. The struggle for reforms is its means; the social revolution, its aim.”

These ideas put forward by Rosa Luxemburg and other Marxists triumphed in the early years of the Second International.

The debate in other circumstances

But the debate took shape again after the defeat of the Russian Revolution of 1905-07 and the boom that capitalism experienced in Europe, which allowed the system to make concessions to the working class and to create a “labor aristocracy”, as Lenin would describe it. This was the context in which other recognized leaders of social democracy, such as Karl Kautsky and August Bebel, took the path of reformism proposed by Eduard Bernstein and used it as a strategy to pressure the governments to obtain concessions; they were shaped by the parliamentary struggle, and in the general discourse they left the idea of overthrowing the established capitalist order without practical consequence.

The problems of the economic crisis that would appear in the



capitalist system a few years later and particularly the confrontation between imperialist countries, mainly Germany and England, due to the division of political and economic influences, led to the outbreak of the First World War in August of 1914; the social democratic parties grouped in the Second International would have to define their positions towards this conflict, with pronounced differences appearing among the main leaders.

The majority of these leaders held back the class struggle in their respective countries; instead of taking advantage of the war and its consequences to promote the revolution; what they did was to avoid the political conflicts, so that the capitalist governments could occupy themselves completely with the issues of war. Many of the social democratic deputies even approved war credits in the parliaments so that the governments had sufficient resources to devote to the war.

The Bolsheviks in Russia did the opposite, as did other consistent Social Democrats in Germany, among them Rosa Luxemburg herself and Karl Liebknecht, who called on the working class to take advantage of the circumstances of the imperialist war to make the revolution. Convert the imperialist war and its consequences for the working class and peoples into a civil war; this was the Marxist orientation.

On the other hand, the reformists defended the line of supporting the bourgeois governments “in defense of the fatherland under attack.”

This fundamental difference marked the break-up of the Second International, and Lenin declared it bankrupt.

In the midst of the revolutionary upsurge that began with the First World War in July (August 1 according to the new calendar) of 1914, and that led to the triumph of the Russian October Revolution of 1917, Lenin gave us a glimpse of his definitive thinking regarding the question of reform and revolution. He reminded his comrades that the error of many parties in the period of the (defeated) revolution of 1905-07 was “to forget that in times of revolutionary upsurge the reforms offered by the governments seek to paralyze the revolution”.

The idea is clear: the struggles for reforms seek to create conditions, to accumulate forces for the revolution; but they do not make sense when the revolution has already begun and is in an upsurge.

The triumph of the October Revolution created the conditions for the emergence and development of the Communist International.

But this did not end the debate in the communist movement about the dialectics of reform and revolution. Many communist parties and leaders, still without much experience in dealing with the issues of tactics and strategy, adopted ultra-left positions and Lenin, with the experience of the whole development of the victorious October Revolution, defined such positions as **the infantile disease of leftism in communism**.

Maybe, or without maybe, the most important work of Lenin on the subjects of tactics, day-to-day politics and the drab everyday struggle, is precisely his book *'Left'-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder*, which has, among other virtues, that of being the result of practical experience, of a complex and unprecedented revolutionary process, with its ups and downs, defeats and triumphs, varied and combined forms of struggles, that was the October Revolution of 1917. It began in 1905, suffered a defeat in 1907, broke out again in February 1917 and one month later it completed its democratic phase and established in power a liberal, non-communist democratic government, which had to maneuver in order to maintain itself. However, that government succumbed to the pressure of the revolutionary struggles of the working class and the working masses, led by the Bolshevik Party that seized power and established socialism in October, in just eight months of tactics and maneuvers.

That book was written in 1920, three years after the triumph of the October Revolution and one year after the Third International was founded. That is to say, it is the generalization of the experiences, the practice, the lessons that the process of the Russian revolution left. It is not speculation, but revolutionary theory that emerged from practice that was thought through, reflected on and generalized.

Lenin described the disorder of leftism at that time as “infantile”. Because they were positions of young communist leaders and parties, without experience, which still started their analysis and proposals from the general ideas of Marx and Engels, and had not had the opportunity to deal with reality and the many factors that must come together and must be dealt with in a revolutionary process on the upsurge.

Between the bankruptcy of the Second International and the subsequent formation of new communist parties and leaders, a very

short time had elapsed, between 1914 and 1918, barely four years. Thus they did not have time to get to know and analyze the unprecedented experiences of the October revolution.

Lenin spent time and struggled theoretically to generalize the practice of the Russian revolutionary process. Among these generalizations were the issues of reformism and parliamentarism.

The young communists of Germany, grouped in the Communist Party and who had fought the opportunism of Bernstein and Kautsky, due to their lack of political maturity took up a policy of the offensive; they set out to seize power when they still did not have the force and influence among the masses, and they were defeated by 1921. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht had been killed in that process by bourgeois reaction.

Many of these new communist parties and leaders, affected by the “infantile” disorder of leftism, rejected the parliamentary struggle; consequently, they denounced participation in elections as opportunist, governed by the idea that, with the triumph of the October Revolution and the emergence in history of Soviet power, “parliamentarism had become obsolete”, it was outdated and one should not make use of it.

Lenin argued that it was one thing to say that bourgeois parliamentarism was “historically obsolete,” because Soviet power, which was superior to it, had appeared in history. It was another thing to show this in practice. True, the Soviet power of the working class was historically superior to the power of bourgeois democracy; but from the practical point of view, that is, of reality, it was a fact that bourgeois governments and parliaments dominated in most of the world, and it was necessary to deal with this reality.

In this effort, the Bolshevik leader came to recognize, and he says in the book in question, that the Russian Communists made a political mistake in declaring a boycott of the legislative elections (to the Duma) called by the Tsar after the defeat of the revolution of 1905-07.

It is recorded in history that after the insurrection of 1905 failed, the tsarist regime tried to liquidate the revolution through a combination of repression and concessions, and in 1906 a parliament was established without real powers and with a very limited electoral system.

What did Lenin say when, after the triumph of 1917, he retrospectively analyzed those facts?

He said that the fraudulent, false character of that parliament was evident to the Bolsheviks and to all the parties that were considered democratic at that time, even to the Mensheviks.

But the masses still could not see that falsehood. The majority of the peasantry, and also the middle classes, had very strong illusions of being able to solve their problems in this way. They saw the call for legislative elections as a hope, especially after the decline of the revolutionary actions.

It would be a mistake for the vanguard to act alone, very much in advance of the masses. One could summarize Lenin, interpreting the experience of the boycott of the parliamentary elections of 1906, as follows:

The only circumstance in which one should boycott an election is when one is in a position to impose a regime superior to the previous one with the force of the masses. If you are not in such a situation, you have to work for it patiently, with mass political work, in situations that reality imposes. If one is in the minority, then for communists and revolutionaries it is mandatory to participate in the elections and fight to win the majority.

How many of the masses support your policy? We must answer this question in order to define tactics and objectives. And also, what is the will of these masses?

If one does not have the force of the masses who respond to our calls for action, the tactic remains in an outline, or in sometimes strident speeches, general truisms, about what should be done in order for things to change. But nothing happens; or what happens is what the ruling classes decide.

If we study the entire course of the Russian revolution, we can highlight the fact that the Bolsheviks participated in the most reactionary and limited parliaments for the sole purpose of connecting with the masses and winning them for their cause.

The masses is the main issue, and it follows from the experience of the October Revolution and Lenin's theoretical generalizations, that in order to carry out the revolution it is necessary to win the masses, and for that purpose to use each and every one of the possibilities to do revolutionary work.

The law of dialectics on how quantitative changes become qualitative ones explains the need for reforms on the road to the revolution.

If the laws of dialectics are objective, if they correspond to the truth and are general, as they exist in all natural phenomena, society and thought, then the dialectics of reform and revolution, which is the same as saying accumulation of forces and leap, is the expression in politics of the law of qualitative changes.

Quantitative changes are generally slow, imperceptible and can take place over a relatively long period of time; on the other hand, qualitative changes are a leap, fast, they change reality in a short time.

In practice, this means fighting in the day-to-day struggle for political and social gains, which could improve the living conditions of the masses of the people and for the general revolutionary political work, even if they do not change the system. These gains could also serve to raise the level of enthusiasm of the masses, given that what has been achieved did not change the oppression or general poverty; it teaches them through facts, through their own experience, that in order to change reality in essence, one must have a revolution.

In *Anti-Dühring*, Fredrick Engels says that “motion is a contradiction; it is both continuous and discontinuous.” It is gradual growth, more or less slow, faster or less fast, but continuous. And in a moment it is discontinuous, in leaps. The leaps only occur after an accumulation of factors over time.

To deny the struggle for reforms is to deny dialectics.

March, 2018

Ecuador

***Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of Ecuador –
PCMLE***

Alejandro Rios

The Popular Referendum of February 4: The People Win, the Popular Organizations and the Left Advance

Ecuador is the scene of an acute political crisis that emerged after the proclamation of the results of the last presidential elections in which, amid serious allegations of electoral fraud, the current president, Lenin Moreno, was proclaimed the winner. Thus, the political heir of Rafael Correa began his administration as an illegitimate president.

Since then, the crisis has had different expressions and forms, and within ten months – since Moreno took office in May 2017 – there has been a significant change in the balance of social and political forces in the country and, once again, a new and positive state of mind of the masses has emerged.

Three elements took place in particular for this to happen: the social discontent with the anti-popular character of Correism, seen mainly in the repudiation of corruption and the demand that the main ones responsible for it be punished; the political struggle within the governing party, Alianza PAIS (AP), which led to its split, the departure of the supporters of Rafael Correa and the taking of control by Lenin Moreno and his group; and the referendum of February 4.

During the last two years of the government of Rafael Correa, his political difficulties in maintaining social control and ensuring the continuity of his political project grew. His intention to continue as the President of the Republic for four more years was frustrated by the angry rejection of broad sectors of the population that brought their discontent into the streets, despite the fact that in December 2015 he got the National Assembly to illegally approve a constitutional reform that allowed his indefinite re-election.¹

¹ Indefinite re-election was introduced illegally when the National Assembly approved amendments to the constitution on December 3,

Correism put its hopes on the continuity of his project with Moreno as president, projecting a period that could be summed up as follows: Moreno the president, Correa in power.

However, the intention of the current head of state to project his image as president with his own personality and the need to have a base that supports him in his particular political project forced him to distance himself from his predecessor. The critical economic situation² in which Correa left the country and the flood of allegations of corruption by officials of the previous administration, all affiliated with or very close to the governing party, deepened that distance, leading to a rupture. A clear sign in this regard was his distancing from former Vice President Jorge Glas³ (who was unconditionally for Correa) and the announcement of his decision to perform “major surgery” to completely eradicate corruption.

In this way, Moreno was in tune with the feelings of the popular sectors who identified the previous government as responsible for the robbery of millions in public funds, for the economic crisis in which the country found itself and who had pointed towards Rafael

2015. A reform of that nature could not be established through an amendment but by a referendum, as established by law. Correism opted for this means because he knew that his proposal would be rejected in a referendum.

In addition to indefinite re-election, changes were also introduced to reduce the rights of public sector workers, strengthen the coercive ability of the State by involving the Armed Forces in internal security, reducing the role of control by the State Comptroller General, converting communication into a public service that must be paid for. That is why our proposal was that all the constitutional amendments approved in 2015 should be left without effect.

² In June of 2017, Lenin Moreno denounced the fact that Correa did not leave things “under control” – as the former president had said – to make it clear that the country was in an economic crisis; in October he expanded his statement on the “under control” and said he believed that Correa drew up a plan to make Moreno’s presidency fail and thus become his main opponent and return as a redeemer.

³ In December 2017, after a criminal trial forced by popular pressure and influenced by the political scenario, the former vice president of the republic was sentenced to six years in prison for corruption. The sentence was pronounced when Glas was still vice president.

Correa and Jorge Glas as the main ones responsible, demanding the removal of the then vice president and prison for both.

In this general context, to gain support among the sectors who did not vote for him but who looked expectantly at what he would do in the confrontation with Correa, and to gain sympathy among other anti-Correa sectors, last September Moreno announced his intention to call a referendum “to undertake a political reform” based on four main policies: “improve the political system to make it more democratic; deepen citizens’ participation; achieve absolute transparency in the election of authorities of control; and strengthen the balance in the functions of the State.”⁴ To define the content of the questions he opened the way for any person or organization to send their proposals to the Presidency.

The referendum was presented as an opportunity and way to begin dismantling – at least in part – the authoritarian and corrupt institutions set up during the so-called citizens’ revolution, a framework that: made possible the criminalization of popular protest, assured Corrist control by fraudulent means of all the functions of the State, created a legal labyrinth to ensure the theft of State funds and the impunity of those criminals, instituted mechanisms to hide the serious economic and social problems of the country, etc., against which the popular movement was fighting all these years and in particular during the last three years of the Correa government. That is, for the organized popular movement and organizations and parties of the left, the referendum became the continuation of the political struggle against this farce known as the citizens’ revolution.

The call for the referendum was not part of the Government’s Program or of any political pronouncement by Moreno during his presidential campaign in 2017. It arose as the initiative of the popular movement during the days of protest in December 2015, when the National Assembly, by order of former President Correa, illegally changed the Constitution to introduce indefinite re-election, the elimination of various rights of the workers and other anti-popular measures. The organizations of the left, such as Unidad Popular (Popular Unity), immediately took up this proposal and presented it during the its electoral campaign with the National Agreement for

⁴ <http://www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/leninmoreno-consultapopular-presentacion-contenido-elgobiernoinforma.html>

Change; then, other candidates, such as Guillermo Lasso, also raised the call.

The content of the referendum

Various social sectors presented their proposals for the referendum, from those identified with the neoliberal right to the trade unions, popular organizations and parties of the left. Rafael Correa and his group tried by all means to prevent it from being carried out – including the action of judges of the Council of the Judiciary obedient to the former president – calling it illegal; then they campaigned for a No vote.

Seven questions were submitted in the plebiscite, all of which questioned fundamental elements of the policy implemented by Correism during the previous administration; some of these questions embodied important demands that had led to massive popular mobilizations in previous years.

It was put up for debate whether every person convicted of acts of corruption should be punished by disqualifying them from participating in the political life of the country and the loss of their property; whether to prohibit indefinite re-election and return to the language approved in the Constituent Assembly of Montecristi in 2008; whether the members of the Council of Citizens' Participation and Social Control should be removed and a transitional council be appointed with the power to evaluate the performance of the authorities who appointed them to it, being able, if this were the case, to



Signs read: “Jail for the corrupt” and “Glas [former vice-president sentenced to prison for accepting bribes] Out, Referendum”

anticipate the termination of their periods for which they were appointed; whether the Constitution of Ecuador should be amended so that there would be no statute of limitations regarding sexual crimes against children and adolescents; whether or not the preservation zone [in the Amazon region – *translator's note*] should be increased by at least 50,000 hectares and whether the area of oil exploitation in the Yasuní National Park authorized by the National Assembly should be reduced from 1,030 hectares to 300 hectares; whether the Constitution should be amended to prohibit metal mining in all its stages, in protected areas and urban centers; and, whether or not the Organic Law to Avoid Speculation on Land Value and Tax Speculation, known as the Law of Capital Gains, should be repealed.

The first three questions have a great political significance; they struck directly at the political action of Rafael Correa and his group.

The effect of the application of the first question is known as political death; it means that those who commit acts of corruption could never again be able to participate as candidates in any popular election or be leaders of legally recognized political movements or parties. It also prohibits corrupt and corrupting companies from signing contracts with the State.

The government of Rafael Correa has been described as the most corrupt in history. Former Vice President Jorge Glas is in prison for corruption; several former ministers, high officials of the previous government and people from the circle closest to Correa have been arrested, prosecuted or fled the country for their responsibility in such acts. There are indications of responsibility of Rafael Correa himself in this regard.

The Civic Anti-Corruption Commission, appointed by the Ecuadorian social movement, estimated that at least \$24,742 million dollars were used for illicit activities during the administration of the decade of Correism. However, the real amount involved in acts of corruption is incalculable, simply because we do not know all the contracts in which there were bribes, overcharges, etc., and even if we knew these cases, we would not always be able to identify their exact amounts. Several analysts believe that this estimate is still conservative.

To get an idea of what this means, it is enough to compare it with the budgetary proposal presented by the Government for 2018, which amounts to US \$34,853 million. In relation to the Gross Do-

mestic Product, GDP, corruption in the last ten years is equivalent to about 25%, since the GDP is about US \$100 thousand million.

According to the Anti-Corruption Commission, corruption would have cost Ecuador \$6.8 million dollars a day, a fact that coincides with the calculations made by the Pichincha College of Economists.

“Without indefinite re-election, for Alianza PAIS (AP) there is no paradise.” For the political future of AP the indefinite reelection of Rafael Correa was a matter of life or death, because its existence and all its activity has always revolved around his personality; therefore first they violated the law in order to approve it and now they furiously oppose it to put an end to it. Now the Correa gang does not have a presidential candidate for the elections of 2021, even more they lack their own electoral party or movement and it is even possible that Correa himself would not be able to run for any popularly elected office due to accusations are lodged against him.

The creation of the Council of Citizens’ Participation and Social Control (CPCCS) (Constitution of 2008) appeared as an important step in establishing a new instrument of control over other functions of the State; however Correa’s leadership distorted its functions, violated the mechanisms created to determine its composition and turned it into another political instrument to expand Corrist control over other functions of the State, including those intended for control such as the Comptroller and Prosecutor.

Among his powers, the Constitution of Montecristi granted him the appointment of the highest authorities of the Function of Transparency and Control: Defender of the Public and the People, Prosecutor, Comptroller, National Electoral Council, Electoral Tribunal for Disputes and Procurator. In addition, it allowed him to select the superintendents, magistrates and Judicial Council, as well as to promote citizens’ participation and to fight against corruption. As we can see, his abilities and powers are of great significance.

The longing for the recognition of the right of the people and the collectives to be able to intervene and influence the political decisions of the State changed to corporatization and cooptation of organizations. The right to a popular initiative, the popular initiative for constitutional reform, the referendum, the public audiences, the oversight offices, the advisory councils all became beautiful concepts that were bureaucratized and controlled by state regulations and lost any sense of transformation.

Two years ago, the Plenary of the CPCCS ended up being totally co-opted by the forces of Alianza PAIS, its members never denied their participation in or closeness to the Correist project. Several of the officials elected by the already terminated Participation Council – through contests of merit and rigged opposition– have been questioned: the former Comptroller, Carlos Polit, who enjoys impunity in the United States; Galo Chiriboga, former Attorney General, who covered up for several Correist officials implicated in corruption; Carlos Ochoa, Superintendent of Communication who was recently dismissed, also for acts of corruption; the members of the National Electoral Council, responsible for the electoral fraud in the previous presidential elections; Carlos Baca Macheno, current Attorney General, over whom hang criminal accusations for acts committed when he was part of a commission appointed by Correa to “investigate” the events of September 30, 2010.

The issue related to sexual crimes against children and adolescents became particularly important in the months prior to the referendum, when hundreds of accusations of sexual harassment and abuse committed in educational establishments became known as well as the inaction and even complicity in many cases by the educational authorities during the administration of the former Minister of Education Augusto Espinosa.⁵

The issue of oil exploitation in Yasuní National Park was the reason for the massive mobilization of rejection, since previously it was declared a zone free of oil extraction that Correa should have respected as such. The defense of the Yasuní became a symbol not only of the environmentalist movement but of all the popular sectors that condemned the submission of Correa to a rampant policy

⁵ Augusto Espinosa was a key player in repressing the actions and struggles of the students and teachers. He declared the National Union of Educators illegal, was co-responsible for the repression of more than 600 secondary students who were imprisoned, tortured and dismissed from their educational establishments for protesting in the streets.

Espinosa is currently a legislator aligned with former President Correa; until recently he presided over the Education Commission of the National Assembly; he resigned that function due to the pressure from various social sectors because of the way he treated the accusations of harassment and rape when he was minister.

of extraction of natural resources, mainly benefiting the big international mining and oil companies.

The increase of the exploitation-free zone and the reduction of the area of oil exploitation in this park is a significant victory, even though the demand raised by various sectors has been for no mining in the park.

In the same line of confrontation against extraction of resources is the opposition to mining activity in the protected areas, exploitation-free zones and urban centers. Peasant and indigenous communities in particular have raised this demand, due to the great, irreparable effect of metal mining: damage to the land; release of toxic substances that are absorbed by living organisms; formation of acidic waters as a result of the drainage of acid from the mines, these acidic waters attack other minerals, producing solutions that can release toxic elements into the environment; copious emission of dust that affects the health of people, animals and agricultural plants; excessive noise (auditory contamination).

The approval of this question gives greater strength to these struggles and raises the possibility of achieving greater demands.

Finally, the opposition to the so-called Law of Capital Gains was due to the fact that its application caused negative effects by the loss of sources of employment in the construction sector. In the course of 23 months, 83 thousand jobs were lost and the participation of this sector in the country's GDP fell from 10% to 8.2%. The interest raised by Correa when he promulgated this law, which would have been to avoid financial speculation, was not fulfilled and it only served as an instrument of tax collection, particularly affecting the middle sectors of the population.

Correism in the pillory

The period until February 4 to understand and discuss the content of the questions raised, was an opportunity for tough questioning of the administration promoted during the citizen's revolution, particularly of the issues related to the authoritarian and corrupt framework.

For the organized popular movement, for the organizations of the left, in the last years Correism became the main target of their struggle; during the referendum it continued to be so and, as the current government is a split-off from it, the unmasking of the Correism also struck the current administration.

The peculiarity of this process is that, except for Correa and his lackeys, all the political forces and the organized popular movement coincided in calling for a Yes vote, something that never occurred before at that level. This could lead some sectors of the masses to lose sight of the differences and contradictions between the different political currents. This circumstance is due to the polarization between Correists and anti-Correists that has characterized the politics of the country in recent years.

In fact there was one Yes vote promoted by the popular interests and another pushed by the interests of the Government and the right. The Yes of the popular movement was qualitatively different from the one promoted by the government and the right; it implied – as we have already said – the continuation of the fight carried out during the previous years against all the anti-popular policies of Correism; it sought to recover some rights violated by the previous government, to dismantle part of the authoritarian institutional framework in order to have better conditions to continue the fight. It was a Yes vote oriented toward a policy of class independence that characterizes the struggle of the workers and the peoples, a Yes that provides new reasons and motives to continue the protest carried out during these years and take it to higher levels, a Yes that endorsed the correctness of the policy of opposition to the government of Rafael Correa.

The Government sought to use the referendum as an opportunity to gain sympathy and popular support and, at the same time, as a mechanism to settle accounts in its confrontation within Correism. Moreno and his group tried to present the triumph of the Yes vote as a victory for the government, but that purpose was discovered and unmasked by various sectors: voting Yes did not mean supporting Moreno, much less giving him a blank check, as it became clear.

The neoliberal right, also opposed to Correism, saw in this process the opportunity to recover lost political positions and put forward some people for the upcoming electoral processes.

Our Party agreed to the call made by the Popular Front and Popular Unity to form a Social and Political Front for the Yes vote, made up of unions, indigenous, peasant, student organizations, etc. of the popular camp and the progressive and leftist movements and organizations, in order to promote a campaign separate from the Government and the right-wing forces. However, the lack of understanding in some sectors about the need to give continuity to the

united efforts in this area, as well as sectarian positions, did not allow this proposal to take shape. Nevertheless, the organizations that make up the Popular Front, the Popular Unity, were fundamental promoters of the campaign for the Yes vote.

Our participation in this process allowed us to reach important sectors of the masses, to disseminate and discuss our points of view with them, to promote the leadership of several comrades. In general, the final balance of our intervention was positive; it allowed us to advance in the process of the accumulation of forces.

The results of the referendum

As was foreseen, the Yes vote won a resounding victory; an average of 68% of the voters supported it. None of the seven questions submitted was defeated.

These results mark a new milestone in the development of the political life of the country: they strengthen the change in the balance of social and political forces; they put an end to a decade of hegemony of a single political force (Alianza PAIS) and of the decisive role of Rafael Correa; and, they encourage the popular sectors to step up the fight for their material demands and political rights.

The structural division of Alianza PAIS has taken place; Correa – who was the object of serious demonstrations of rejection in his



travels around the country – was left without a party and in the minority; his bloc in the National Assembly has no decision-making ability and it lost the positions that it had obtained under his leadership. Moreno's bloc in the Assembly also does not have the strength to impose decisions; it has to make agreements and alliances with other forces, its behavior towards the cases of corruption that have had to be dealt with in the Legislature has led to its loss of prestige because it has sought to avoid sanctions; the neoliberal right continues to be disunited and the personality of Jaime Nebot, the Social Christian leader, is emerging to face off against Lasso in his presidential efforts for 2021,.

The image of President Lenin Moreno came out stronger, with Correa and his gang as his main opposition. But that strengthening is relative, after a grace period that the Ecuadorian people granted him until the referendum was over; now they are demanding that he fulfill his electoral promises and attend to their unmet needs. In addition, his presidential administration is facing severe problems: the large fiscal deficit, the enormous foreign debt, the lack of resources to develop infrastructure. He cannot count on a majority bloc in the National Assembly to assure the approval of his projects, the allegations of corruption are spreading to Correists who are part of the current administration, the masses desire to have their needs met.

A few days after the referendum, an opinion poll was published in which, although Moreno had the highest rating for his work (67.5%), other indices in the same poll show how relative this is, since 55.2% of Ecuadorians believe that the country is just as bad or worse and 62.4% are not optimistic about the future of the country.

In May 2017, Moreno's positive rating was 59.3% and it reached its highest point in August of that year (76.4%), but then it began to fall to its current level, while his negative rating went from 22.8% in May 2017 to 26.0% in February 2018. What is worrying for Moreno is that the results of this poll were after the February 4 referendum, by which he sought to consolidate his political image; however, the downturn was not broken.

The relativity of Moreno's positive rating has another factor: there is a group of Ecuadorians who look with sympathy on his break with Correa and his speeches calling for the removal of corruption. However, this is not a "stable base" but a sector that, in order to continue its confrontation with and political isolation of Correa, decided to give a grace period to the current president. But

now this sector is demanding changes, demanding that he fulfill his promises; our people are moving from initial expectations to disappointment with the government.

Now there are better conditions for the actions of the popular and leftist organizations. Our Party has continued to apply the policy of demands against the government, which is a form of opposition policy, and it is working to materialize it in all the sectors of the masses among which we act. This is a policy that, starting from the interests of the workers and people, seeks to raise the struggle for these demands and thus to show the political, class limits of the current government and to present our political proposals at this period, particularly those with strategic content.

In essence, on February 4, the people achieved a victory, since all the issues in the referendum were part of the agenda, the discourse, the action of the Ecuadorian popular movement in the last years. This confirms the correctness of the politics and struggle of the popular movement and of the left forces against the anti-popular character of the so-called Citizens' Revolution.

Our Party and its forces have played a part in that victory.

March 2018

Germany

Organization for the Construction of the Workers' Communist Party of Germany

Niels Clasen

One Hundred Years of the November Revolution in Germany

In November, 2018, we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the November Revolution, an epoch-making event for our country! It involved hundreds of thousands of people in the whole “Reich” and generated enormous forces. It only could be prevented from advancing to a socialist revolution by the brutal violence of the forces of counter-revolution, primarily by the “Reichswehr” and “Freikorps” units now led by the social democrats (“Freikorps” were nationalist and fascist gangs, which have been armed and financed by capital). Here the revolutionary force of our working class and people was shown, even if we seem far from this today. It is also a living demonstration of the dangers that may occur in a revolution.

The November Revolution was not a single act that emerged from nothing. The German working class did not suddenly become revolutionary and then withdraw from the arena of history again. The November Revolution had a long history and also left behind deep marks in our country.

Seventy years earlier the Communist Manifesto, written by Karl Marx was published. Forty-three years ago the SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany) was founded as a revolutionary workers' party under the leadership of August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht. At that time it was a really revolutionary party that wanted to overthrow and abolish the capitalist system and build up socialism. Both of these important events were based on the existence of a strong, militant workers' movement. Without such a mass base the idea of socialism could not have become so widespread or develop such deep roots.

But from the beginning there were different currents in the revolutionary SPD including opportunism, pandering to capital. Marx and Engels already struggled against this with all their might, in particular within the bureaucracy in the unions, which had

become strong during the growth of the unions. They had become advocates of a “peaceful solution”, of a “collaboration with capital for the collective good”.

**The struggle in the revolutionary movement
about its position towards the war**

An important starting point for the November Revolution was the beginning of the imperialist First World War.

Early on a dispute about the position on the war broke out inside the SPD. The international Socialist Congress of Stuttgart in 1907 had obligated the social-democratic parties to take all measures to struggle against the danger of war and to maintain world peace. Upon the request of V.I. Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg the following amendment was adopted:

“If the war should break out anyhow, they (the social-democratic parties) are bound to advocate its quick ending and to do their utmost to take advantage of the economic and political crisis created by the war for the political shakeup of the masses and for the speedup of the collapse of the capitalist class rule.”

In 1912 this decision was confirmed once again at the International Socialist Congress in Basel, but in fact the influence of the “defenders of the fatherland” had already increased. In 1907 already the deputy of the Reichstag Gustav Noske (SPD) had praised the “peace policy” of the imperial government (1) and declared that social democracy did not want to undermine discipline in the army in any way; that it wanted to see Germany as well-defended as possible and that it would take up arms in case of war and would not let itself be outdone by any other class in patriotism. Noske was not even expelled from the SPD, but he began his career in it.

On 25 July, 1914, just before the First World War, the “Vorwärts” (party organ of the SPD) published an appeal against the imperialist war that ended with the demands:

“We don’t want any war! Down with the war! Up with international fraternization!”

Whereas the imperial military at the behest of the government at first had planned to arrest all the social-democratic deputies at the beginning of the war, the Ministry of War already decided on 24 July, 1914, to refrain from imprisonments. In secret negotiations the leadership of SPD had agreed to support the imperialist war.

At the same time, the social-democratic newspapers began the most evil chauvinist agitation. On 31 July, 1914 the “Frankfurter Volksstimme” appealed for the “*overthrow of czarism and its bloody regime*”. On 2 August, 1914 the “Chemnitzer Volksstimme” declared “*The wives and children of Germany shall not become victims of Russian bestiality, the German land will not become the spoil of the Cossacks... our comrades will enter the struggle for German freedom and the independence of the German people...*”

Thus on 4 August, 1914, the SPD in parliament agreed to credits for financing the war. Thus it took sides with German imperialism and lost its revolutionary character.

The struggle of the revolutionaries against the war

With the evolution of the SPD into a war party the revolutionaries around Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg founded the “International Group” in 1914, which renamed itself the “Spartacus League” in 1916 and joined the USPD (Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany, which was formally against the war, but really followed a wavering, left social-democratic course of compromise), which had split from the SPD.

The great German revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg was imprisoned on 18 February 1915 by the government of the Reich in collaboration with the leadership of the SPD. She remained in jail until nearly the end of the war in 1918, with only a short interruption.

On 2 December 1914 Karl Liebknecht became the only deputy of the SPD who rebelled openly and clearly against the imperialist war and refused to agree to war credits. The imperial government and the SPD now wanted to get rid of him. Therefore he was drafted into an armoured battalion early in February, where he was deployed on both the western and eastern fronts. Therefore he was subjected to military judgement. He was not allowed to carry on political activity outside the Reichstag and Prussian Landtag. However, he was still active. In 1916 he spoke against the war at the “Easter Conference of the Youth” in Jena. On May 1st he was the leader of a demonstration against the war in Berlin. When he shouted: “Down with the war! Down with the government!” he was arrested. He was then condemned to four years imprisonment with the aid of the SPD leadership. The trial became a fiasco for the imperial judiciary, which it intended to be an example against the

revolutionaries. Organised by the revolutionary shop stewards, a solidarity strike with more than 50,000 participants took place in Berlin. Instead of weakening the opposition, Liebknecht's imprisonment gave a new boost to the resistance against the war. He was released almost three weeks before the end of the First World War after two years of imprisonment.

The imperialist war – a horrible slaughter

While the leadership of the SPD got appointments in the Reich government, millions of workers were sent to war and lost their lives there. Worldwide about 18 million soldiers and civilians together were killed in this war.

The German Emperor used an attack by the Serbian army near Temes Kubin on 26 July, 1914, which never actually occurred, as a reason to start the imperialist war. Pressed by the German Emperor, the Austrian emperor declared war on Serbia on 28 July, 1914. On 1 August German imperialism declared war on the Russian Empire. On 2 August Luxembourg was occupied without a declaration of war against France. On 4 August the German army attacked Belgium in order to march against France. In a very short time all the great European imperialist forces were at war: England, France, Russia, and by 1917 also the USA with its allies against Germany and Austria-Hungary with their allies. In all 40 states took part in this war.

The fronts soon became stagnant, mainly the western front. A bloody war of position followed for years, often over several meters of land. For the first time, modern weapons such as tanks and planes were used on a mass scale. This it was possible to kill in an industrial and massive manner. For the first time poison gas was used in great quantities, by which countless soldiers were asphyxiated in a woeful manner.

While in the beginning some soldiers on both sides went willingly to the war, dazzled by the nationalist propaganda, this increasingly turned to frustration, anger and hate against the war. The soldiers saw how their comrades died. Many were wounded. They saw the arrogance of the officers. They heard from their families at home how inflation grew and many people went hungry. They also saw, that the soldiers on the other side were their brothers, workers. There were many social-democratic workers, who were grown up in the revolutionary SPD, whose consciousness grew that this was an imperialist war, in which the workers of the

different countries were set against each other and killed each other. In Germany in the winter of 1916/1917 there was mass hunger. Due to the inflation, many families could barely afford food. But for the big farmers it was more profitable to feed the crops to the cattle or burn liquor, because the upper class lived well from this war and could afford meat and liquor. This showed many people that capital profited from the war, while the working class had to pay with blood and hunger.

When mass strikes and insurrections in Russia and finally the February Revolution of 1917 broke out, many German revolutionary opponents of the imperialist war were encouraged. When finally the first workers' and peasants' government was formed in the October Revolution of 1917 and urgent measures were taken to end the war and to transform the society step by step towards socialism, this was a great stimulus for the revolutionaries in Germany to organise against war here as well and to struggle for socialism.

When an armistice was signed between revolutionary Russia and Germany on 5 December, 1917, German and Russian soldiers celebrated together at the front.

There were repeated refusals to obey orders and uprisings in the army. In January 1918 a wave of strikes took place organised by the revolutionary shop stewards, involving a million workers throughout Germany. The SPD, which was tightly bound to capital, saw the danger that a revolution might take place in Germany too and grasped all means such as deception, lies, repression and violence to avoid this development. Thus in Berlin the social-democratic leader Ebert became a member of the leadership of the January strikes and arranged for their rapid abandonment.

A last offensive of the German military at the western front in August 1918 quickly collapsed and led to a disaster. In just one day 27,000 soldiers lost their lives for the interests of German capitalism. On 29 September the military leadership informed the Emperor and the Chancellor of the Reich that the situation was unwinnable. They recommended an armistice and the transfer of the government to the SPD in order to be able to blame it for the defeat. Now the SPD officially joined the imperial government. Regarding the masses it declared that it wanted to arrange a quick peace, while in the government it supported all the measures of reaction and capital.

The November Revolution

The generals still wanted to restart the war. At Kiel the leadership of the German Navy under Admiral Franz von Hipper planned to send the fleet for a last battle against the Royal Navy in the English Channel. The German fleet would have to fight until the last ship sank. This would mean the useless deaths of tens of thousands of sailors. But this command was passed on to the ordinary sailors by a radio officer. On 3 November 1918 the sailors hoisted red flags on their ships, disarmed the officers and on 4 November formed together with the workers of Kiel a workers' and soldiers' council. That same evening the SPD deputy in the Reichstag Gustav Noske arrived at Kiel. The governor had asked by telegram to send an SPD deputy who could get the insurrection under control by order of the government of the Reich and the leadership of the party. Noske declared to the workers' and soldiers' council that he wanted to lead the "revolution to victory" and was voted its leader. With tricks and lies, he organised the disarming of the revolutionaries and the rearming of the officers step by step. Thus he was able to roll back the influence of the councils in Kiel. But he could not prevent the development of the revolution in Germany, which spread quickly throughout the country. Everywhere workers' and soldiers' councils were formed and in a few days the monarchy was abolished.



Liebkecht at a demonstration in the Tiergarten, Berlin

But the leader of the SPD, Ebert, was united with reaction and capital to prevent a social revolution and maintain the social order under all circumstances. He wanted to attract the bourgeois parties, which had already worked together with the SPD in the Reichstag in 1917, as well as the elites of the empire for the reorganisation of the state. He wanted to prevent a radicalisation along the Russian model. He declared, as he demanded the abdication of the Emperor: *“If the Emperor does not abdicate, the social revolution is unavoidable. But I do not want this; I hate it like sin.”*

The Emperor, who had sent millions of soldiers to death and asked “courage and bravery” from them, cowardly went into exile in the Netherlands.

The Social-Democrats throttle the revolution

On 9 November 1918 the social-democratic leader Ebert proclaimed a bourgeois-democratic republic, which he demagogically called a revolutionary government to the masses. The masses were told to go home and keep quiet so that the government could do its work. At the same time Karl Liebknecht proclaimed the socialist republic in front of ten thousands of workers and soldiers: *“I proclaim the free socialist republic of Germany... in which there will be no more servants, in which every honest worker will receive honest pay for his work. The rule of capitalism, which has turned Europe into a cemetery, has been broken.”*

That the same evening the revolutionary shop stewards seized the Reichstag and planned to form a “Council of People’s Deputies”, as in Russia. When the leaders of the SPD became aware of this, they did everything to prevent it. Since the mass spirit was still revolutionary, they were forced to agree with this, but managed through manipulation to gain the leadership of this Council. At the same time Ebert remained President of the Reich. He made a secret deal with the supreme general and military leader Groener on 10 November 1918 to strangle the revolution. Ebert ensured that all the former reactionary officers would retain their posts and their power, and that he would take action against the workers’ and soldiers’ councils. In this way he obtained the support of the reactionary military. At the same time, from 9 to 12 November, representatives of big industry and leaders of the German trade unions met in Berlin. On 15 November 1918, they signed a secret agreement in which the leaders of the unions promised to end “wildcat” strikes

and to ensure regular production, to roll back the influence of the councils and to prevent the expropriation of capital. In exchange capital conceded the eight-hour day and the right to exclusive representation for the unions in the factories. That was mainly directed against the councils, which would be abolished. In the following days the SPD agreed not to touch either the old military or the old state machine.

Shortly before the “First General Congress of the Councils of People’s Deputies” the leader of the SPD, Ebert, tried to prevent this from being called by a military putsch. In this 16 revolutionaries were killed. But Ebert did not win. Thus he was forced to manipulate the “First General Congress of the Councils of People’s Deputies” and to give himself a majority by tricks and lies. At this time, Berlin was militarily in the hands of the revolutionaries. But they were not well organised. A Communist Party was lacking that could lead the insurrection and direct it toward socialism. The leader of the SPD, Ebert, who realised this weakness, encouraged the reactionary military to form the so-called “Freikorps” (armed gangs) outside of the regular army, which could be used as a troop of murderers against the revolutionaries.

The Foundation of the KPD and the struggle for power

Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg recognized little by little the need for a revolutionary party. So at the end of 1918 they called for a founding party congress. The party was founded on 31 December, 1918. This was a first step toward the solid organisation of the revolutionary forces. However the party lacked the experience, inner stability and training in the revolutionary mass struggle.

In order to keep his power, the leader of the SPD, Ebert, caused the dismissal of the revolutionary Chief of Police of Berlin, Emil Eichhorn, who had refused to fire on striking workers. The communists and left social-democrats called for a demonstration against this for the next day. To their surprise, several hundred thousand people came, many of them armed. They occupied the railway stations of Berlin, the bourgeois newspapers and the social-democratic newspaper “Vorwärts”. A “Provisional Revolutionary Committee” consisting of Liebknecht and others was formed, which argued for the revolutionary overthrow of the Ebert government. Unfortunately, the Communists were not united. Rosa Luxemburg,

for example, was against an insurrection at this time.

Ebert utilised the weakness and disunity of the revolutionaries. On 6 January 1919 he named Gustav Noske (SPD) People' Deputy for the Army. Noske stated: *“As for me, one person must become the bloodhound. I do not avoid the responsibility.”* Instantly he called together the troops and “Freikorps” around Berlin and on 9 January he ordered to suppress the revolutionary uprising. The “Freikorps” moved up, occupied great parts of Berlin and massacred the revolutionaries. Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg went into hiding, but they refused to leave Berlin. On 15 January, they were arrested, tortured and killed. The perpetrators, members of the “Guards Cavalry Protection Division”, quickly became known, but they were protected by the leadership of the SPD. In June 1919, a trial conducted by a judge who was a member of this Division ended with the acquittal of the murderers.

In the following weeks Noske (SPD) ordered the army and the “Freikorps” to drown the revolution in blood throughout Germany: Bremen, the Ruhr, Saxony, Upper Silesia, the Rhineland, Hamburg and Munich. Thus the SPD saved the rule of capital.

Ernst Thälmann about the November Revolution

The leader of the KPD, Ernst Thälmann, wrote in commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the November Revolution: *“The objective situation fulfilled all the conditions for the victory of the proletarian revolution... the ruling class and its state apparatus were demoralised by the military defeat in the world war... And the proletarians?... (They) joined the camp of the proletarian revolution in their overwhelming majority”* *“Thus, measured by the objective class situation, the objective class relations, the situation was ripe for the victory of the German revolution.”*

“The tragedy of the German revolution in 1918... consisted in the difference between the objectively mature revolutionary conditions on the one hand, and the subjective weakness of German proletariat on the other, caused by the absence of a Bolshevik Party with clear aims.”

We can learn two things from the failed November Revolution.

First: the huge revolutionary power of the German working class, if they were determined to fight. This power has its roots in the revolutionary traditions such as the peasant uprising in 1525 or

the democratic revolution of 1848, in which Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels participated. This power was also seen when, after fascism was smashed in 1945, an anti-fascist order was built up in the GDR by the working class, which took the first steps in direction of socialism, until these were destroyed by revisionism. This power also was seen in Western Germany, when millions of people struggled against militarisation and re-armament and for their social rights.

Second: The destiny of the November Revolution makes clear that there can be no socialism without a revolutionary party. Such a party must be deeply connected with the masses, organise itself strongly and in a united manner and defend its revolutionary character against opportunism and revisionism.

Particularly today, when German capital, in collaboration with US imperialism, NATO and the EU, is taking up an aggressive course of militarisation and re-armament, together with progressive cuts in social welfare, we are painfully aware of the lack of a communist workers' party in our country. One of the most important lessons of the history of the German workers' movement is to struggle again for a communist party with all our might. We will use the 100th anniversary of the November Revolution to spread these lessons.

March 2018



Revolution in Berlin, soldiers in the struggle

India

Revolutionary Democracy

From the October Revolution to the Construction of Socialism in One Country

Introduction

The Great October Revolution of 1917 is without a doubt the most momentous event in modern History, in that it signified the first step towards the construction of a society no longer based exploitation of man by man. The October revolution is the first time in History where the vanguard of the exploited classes seize and maintain power, bringing about the creation of a state of a new kind and leading to fundamental socio-economic transformation never seen before. It is, therefore, of great importance for progressive movements worldwide to celebrate it in this 100th anniversary. The revolutionary process that unfolded needs to be celebrated passionately by those who wish to remind the bourgeoisie that its rule remains temporary.

Much has been written and debated about the sequence of political events that prompted the October revolutionary coup. Indeed, the Russian Empire was engulfed in unbearable convulsions that brought Tsarist rule to an end, followed by an interim period ripe with contradictions that finally resulted in a government of a new kind, that of workers, soldiers and peasants. Rightly so, the events of 1917 on their own warrant extensive historical research. Nobody questions the complexity of the political events that unfolded in 1917, as it remains a fascinating historical watershed.

The events of 1917 have also been exalted by modern revisionism.¹ Modern revisionism in the Soviet Union unapologetically glorified the October revolution despite having brought socialist and communist constructions to a halt and reverted the social transformation that was brought about by the very same October revolution. Together with bourgeois propaganda, Trotskyism, while glorifying

¹Modern revisionism is defined here as the mainstream ideology that underpinned the new regime established in the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies in Eastern Europe following the economic and political reforms that were initiated in the second half of 1953.

the October revolution, rejects the socialist character of the economic transformations that took place in the 1930s-50s. Their attack on this transformational process is vicious, in sync with the scathing criticism made by the bourgeoisie. It is based on Trotsky's conjecture about the impossibility of the construction of Socialism in one country, in contrast to Lenin's vision for the construction of socialism in Russia.

The Russian bourgeoisie today chooses to appear sympathetic to the October events, even if superficially. The bulk of the Russian toiling masses remain sympathetic to the October coup. This does not go unnoticed by the Russian elites and their government. As a result, the Russian elites tantalize the Russian toiling masses with more or less ambiguous celebrations of the 100th anniversary of the October revolution. Revisionism and the Russian elite are able to display some sort of allegiance to the October revolution because they have divorced the latter from the social and economic transformations of the 1930s-50s. These demonstrated the feasibility of the construction of socialism in one country and the superiority of socialism over capitalism. When revisionism and the bourgeoisie tease the toiling masses with superficial celebrations of the October revolution, they imply a very different vision. Revolutionaries should vindicate the October revolution from a distinct perspective if they do not want the great events of 1917 to be trivialized and adulterated by the bourgeoisie. By decoupling the October revolution from the period of transformation that followed, the bourgeoisie intentionally aims at nullifying its true revolutionary character, in that it successfully fulfilled a historical mission. It is this mission that the bourgeoisie does not want to get accomplished by revolutionary movements. This it strives to reduce the October events to something more of sentimental value devoid of a historical perspective. Revisionism has the same intentions, in that it makes every possible effort to establish a rift between the October events and the feasibility to construct socialism in one country.

Revolutionaries should uphold the October Revolution with the highest accolades. In doing so, the greatness of the October revolution should not be discussed in isolation from the historical mission that it was bound to fulfill and it did fulfill. The construction of socialism in one country and the demonstration of the superiority of socialism over capitalism constitute the core of the historical mission that October revolution has contributed to History. This his-

torical mission was accomplished as a result of a titanic effort in the period that followed, which involved fighting foreign intervention, bourgeois, petty bourgeois and revisionist influences in a country that lagged behind industrialized countries by 50 to 100 years.

Here we choose to view the events of 1917 from the historical perspective of socio-economic transformation over an extended period of time, as opposed to considering the political event in isolation. While the complexity of the events of 1917 remains unquestionable, these pale in comparison to the intricacy of the transformative process that followed. How does political transformation engender socio-economic transformation in a historically backward country in the conditions of capitalist encirclement? What was the path that resulted in the first socialist society? What were the social and economic achievements of this transformation? How was it possible to bring an agrarian country that was so much behind the West to the level of a highly industrialized country that in the 1950s was able to lead in many areas of science in technology despite two devastating wars? These are the questions that revolutionaries today need to deal with head on in front of the toiling masses when addressing the historical significance of the October revolution. It is not enough to laud the coup; it is necessary to frame it from the standpoint of socialist transformation.

The bourgeoisie, together with revisionism of all sorts, has made every effort to tarnish and to trivialize the complexity of this transformation. Bourgeois and revisionist propaganda has and still today stubbornly continues to disparage the vast historical experi-



ence pertaining to the construction of socialism in the Soviet Union and the countries of People's Democracies in the period between the October revolution and the mid 1950s. The demise of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc in 1989-1991 is viewed as a logical outcome allegedly linked to the inability of socialism to fulfill its historical task. In fact, these events bear witness of quite the opposite. The economic reforms initiated in the second half 1953 and further enacted in the second half of the 1950s introduced structural changes in the management of the economy, the interrelation between the planning centres and production units, between the workers and the management, the character of labour exchange and the relative growth of heavy industry with respect to other sectors of the economy. The results were felt soon, where the overall economic growth slowed down. The working class gradually lost interest in the increase of labour productivity, which had become so well-known in the socialist period. Social stratification became pervasive, while the rise of standards of living of the toiling masses characteristic of the post-war period and the 1950s, withered away. Towards the 1960s the revisionist leadership was not oblivious to the fact that the new social formation that emerged as a result of the economic and political reforms of the 1950s was in crisis. However, instead of repealing the course that led to the new state of affairs, theories of market-Socialism became main-stream. Khrushchovism was replaced by Brezhnevism, where pro-market reforms were further implemented. The social ills that emerged in the 1960s were magnified and the economies stagnated showing strong signs of technological backwardness, inefficiency, disarray and ultimately chaos.

Revisionism and the bourgeoisie are all too eager to lump together all phases of the history of the Soviet Union. The demise of the revisionist system is presented as the logical outcome of the inability of the so called "command-administrative" or "Stalinist economy" to deal with the management of the economy. The demise of revisionism is portrayed as the failure of socialism to become sustainable, and a demonstration that the market remains the only form of economic organization. The bourgeoisie wants the working class to believe that social revolutions will eventually revert to the path of capitalist development, as it appears there is no viable alternative. Revisionism and the bourgeoisie adhere to the superficial analysis of the political and economic history of the So-

viet Union. At the same time they are conscious of the need to project that image on a systematic basis, as they are terrified that the progressive movements come to the realization that History is being misrepresented for political reasons.

There is a clear logic behind this: the exploited masses should not be aware that there was a historical period where the superiority of socialism over capitalism was demonstrated in all relevant parameters. The bourgeoisie continues to demonize the true revolutionary content of the October coup out of the fear that the working class rearms itself with a revolutionary understanding of why and how society needs to be reshaped.

As per the Marxist-Leninist theory of the State and social transformation, the October revolution becomes a precondition, a necessary condition, for the construction of a society of a new type. It is, however, not a sufficient condition. It is for this reason that revolutionaries today should celebrate the 100th anniversary of the October revolution not as a standalone political event, but as the catalyser to a revolutionary epoch that spanned 35 years. This revolutionary transformation was reversed by a series of political and economic reforms implemented in the second half of the 1950s that led to the generation of a new social formation. This new social formation, void of socialist character, eventually collapsed under the weight of its own contradictions. It was not the socialist formation that collapsed, but its own negation.

It is essential at this point that a reference be made to what came to be known in the History of the Soviet Union as the year of great change (“god velikovo pereloma² in Russian), 1929. Towards 1925/1926 the economy had been restored to the level before the First World War. This applies to both agricultural and industrial aggregate outputs. A period 1926/1929 follows where intense debates take place about the path towards socialism. The Leninist plan towards socialism was conceived on the basis of the industrialization of the country. At that time the Soviet Union still remained a predominantly agrarian country, although native industry was making significant progress to the point where it was beginning to produce machinery. Labour productivity in the countryside was very

² “A Year of Great Change” is the title of an article by J.V. Stalin published in Pravda on the 12th anniversary of the October Revolution, Works, Vol. 12, pp. 124-141.

low, as manual labour was prevalent. The relative weight of the collective farms in the agricultural output was very small. Individual producers mostly drove agricultural production. Individual producers were not in a position to mechanize the productive process without the assistance of socialist industry. The only sectors of the peasantry that could possibly afford mechanization of labour were the affluent peasants, referred to as Kulaks, who were in a position to employ the labour of poorer peasants. It was not in the interest of the Soviet State to promote the capitalist path of development in the countryside. The capitalist development of the countryside would have resulted in the impoverishment of wide sectors of the peasantry, who would be forced to sell their labour to the more affluent. At the same time, the capitalist development of the countryside would have not been in a position to provide the necessary growth of the agricultural output.

The rapid industrialization of the country required more workers and that these workers be fed appropriately by the agricultural sector. However, the low level of productivity in agriculture became a showstopper to the rapid industrialization of the country. The Soviet industry by the end of the civil war was unable to provide the means for the mechanization of agriculture, as it was unable to produce machinery in necessary quantities. The New Economic Policy (NEP) that followed the civil war was necessary for the socialist industry to gain the badly needed momentum to eventually provide the means to agriculture to join the path of socialist construction on the basis of mechanization. The mechanization of the countryside could only happen on the basis of massive collectivization of the peasantry and its cooperation with socialist industry.

Both the Trotskyite and Bukharinist oppositions adamantly campaigned against the party line towards the sustainable industrialization of the country, as suggested by the Party. Apparently, the Leninist path for the construction of socialism alluded to above was not obvious in the minds of the ideologists of the opposition. Trotskyism on the one hand, never understood the imperative need to sustain the political unity between working class and the bulk of the peasantry. Their theories of industrialization de facto favoured the upper echelons of the peasantry that would result in the impoverishment of the middle and poor peasant, and with that obliterating the alliance with the working class. Bukharin and his collaborators, on the other hand, vehemently opposed the plans for rapid industri-

alization and collectivization on the grounds that it would disrupt a certain economic equilibrium.³ Rapid industrialization is an absolute necessity in the conditions of capitalist encirclement. Had the Soviet Union followed the path suggested by Bukharin, it would not have been able to industrialize in the 1930s at the pace necessary to become a self-sufficient economy capable of defeating fascism. Trotsky in practice adopted some of the rightist positions of Bukharin on questions of socialist construction. Needless to say, there were fundamental flaws in the theoretical reasoning and methodologies followed by the opposition, in that it was essentially non-Marxist and anti-Leninist. These were exposed at the time, but are not discussed in detail here.⁴

The Bolshevik Party consistently upheld the Leninist line for the construction of socialism in one country. The different phases that the Soviet economic policies pursued in the years that followed the October Revolution had the construction of socialism in mind. The replacement of the policies of War Communism by the NEP had the construction of socialism in mind above all. As the Soviet economy was devastated by years of wars, the incipient socialist industry was unable to provide the necessary means for the peasantry to socialize the productive process. The restoration of eco-

³ The theory of equilibrium lies at the heart of right wing interpretations of the political economy of socialism. A.A. Bogdanov formulated the theory of equilibrium in the Russian context by adapting it from bourgeois sources. Bukharin adopts these ideas that shaped his understanding of the political economy of the transitional period. In essence, Bukharin and collaborators argued that the capitalist and socialist economic principles could coexist for a lengthy period of time. It is assumed that the socialist sector of the economy would grow faster, eventually rendering the capitalist sector obsolete. The Marxist-Leninist critique of the theory of equilibrium essentially disappeared in the Soviet Union in the 1960s.

⁴ At the time of Perestroika a push was made to vindicate Bukharin and other economists of the 1920s who opposed the party line towards massive industrialization. The works of a number of economists were published and widely distributed in the second half of the 1980s and beyond. While formally endorsing Leninism, the revisionist leadership essentially sided with the views in favour of market socialism that were formulated in the 1920s.

conomic activity had to emerge on the basis of a type of cooperation between the socialist industry and the peasantry different from that implemented during the years of War Communism. The persistence of the policies of War Communism threatened to establish a rift between the working class and wide sectors of the peasantry. The restoration of the agricultural output to the level before the war was not possible on the basis of socialist collectivization, as the material basis of this transition was not available at the time. The development of individual farming and a certain growth of capitalist production, especially in the countryside, became characteristic of the period of the NEP. This never implied, as ideologists of Perestroika argued at some point, that the path towards socialism goes through the development of individual production, where the process of collectivization would happen spontaneously. Ideologists of right-wing revisionism, including Trotsky, have argued that the NEP is an inevitable stage in the transitional period towards socialism, in that socialist industry and petty producers would compete through the market for a lengthy period of time. The Leninist view upheld by the party was different from that petty-bourgeois conception. The introduction of NEP became a necessity given the economic and political realities of a country devastated by two wars. The introduction of the NEP was not a result of Lenin and the party fundamentally re-thinking the political economy of the transitional period. It was realized in practice that the conditions were not ripe to transition directly to communist production and distribution bypassing a transitional period. As a matter of fact, it was clear in Lenin's mind before the Revolution that between capitalism and full-blown socialism lies a transitional period and that the direct transition to the communist principle of production and distribution was not going to be feasible in a country like Russia.

To a great extent driven by the extreme circumstances determined by the foreign intervention and the civil war, the Soviet Government appropriated all surplus from the peasants to support the activities of the socialist state. Towards 1921 it was realized that the country was facing an acute political and economic crisis. This impelled the Soviet Government to replace the policy alluded to above in such a way that the peasants could retain a significant fraction of the agricultural surplus. The tax collected from the peasant constituted a small share of the surplus. The peasant was then allowed to sell production in the market. The NEP became the only resort to

get the peasantry interested in the increase of agricultural output. By no means does this imply that Lenin and the Bolshevik party viewed the development of individual and capitalist production as the primary means to create the material basis for the transition to socialism, as argued by right-wing revisionism.

The expansion of individual production through commodity-money relations invariably engendered capitalism. It is evident that the NEP had to come to an end as soon as the material basis for the collectivization of the countryside became available. For this purpose socialist industry had to grow as much as possible in order to generate the material basis for the socialist transformation of the countryside. The socialist transformation of the countryside is not a spontaneous process, but rather one that requires revolutionary drive. This vision underpins the resolutions and decisions of the Party and the Soviet government in the 1920s. This vision was not shared by the Trotskyite and Bukharinist oppositions. Had either of them taken over the leadership of the Party there is little doubt that socialism would not have been constructed in the Soviet Union. The true revolutionary potential of the October coup would have been obliterated, as the Leninist plan for the construction of socialism in one country was under question.

The economic output eventually recovered to the level before the imperialist war. Socialist industry grew sufficiently over the period of 1926-1929 to the extent that the question of massive collectivization could be put on the agenda. The first five-year plan was established in 1928 with the aim to industrialize the country. Not just any kind of industrialization was implied. The Marxist-Leninist view on the character of industrialization is such that a leading role is given to heavy industry. This lies at the heart of the economic reforms enacted by the Soviet Government that was systematically challenged by the Trotskyite and Bukharinist oppositions.

Towards 1929, or the year of the great change, material and political conditions for the socialist offensive in the countryside had converged. On the one hand, socialist industry was in a very different position compared to that that it found itself in 1921. On the other hand, the Party was united around the Leninist plan for the construction of socialism in one country, on the basis on the Marxist-Leninist political economy of the transitional period. The core of this conception revolves around the absolute necessity to industrialize the country, where preponderance is given to the production of

means of production. It is in 1929 when the Bolshevik party undertakes the revolutionary transformational process towards the construction of socialism that could not be tackled in 1918. It is for this reason that the Bolshevik party elevated the relevance of the year of the great change to that of the October revolution:

“This was a profound revolution, a leap from an old qualitative state of society to a new qualitative state, equivalent in its consequences to the revolution of October 1917.

...The revolution, at one blow, solved three fundamental problems of Socialist revolution:

a) It eliminated the most numerous class of exploiters in our country, the kulak class, the mainstay of capitalist restoration;

b) It transferred the most numerous labouring class in our country, the peasant class, from the path of individual farming, which breeds capitalism, to the path of co-operative, collective, Socialist farming;

c) It furnished the Soviet regime with a Socialist base in agriculture – the most extensive and vitally necessary, yet least developed, branch of national economy

This destroyed the last mainspring of the restoration of capitalism within the country and at the same time created new and decisive conditions for the building up of a Socialist economic system.” (“History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1945, page 305, based on the History of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks): Short Course, Gospolitizdat 1938.)

This turning point in the History of the Soviet Union is absolutely essential to materialize the revolutionary essence of the October coup. It is not possible to comprehend the depth of the historical role embodied by October revolution outside the context of the transformational processes unleashed and how these were articulated in time. Without the year of the great change, without this turning point that enabled the proletariat state to suppress the remaining exploiting classes and to construct socialism at the scale of the entire economy, the October Revolution would not have come to fruition. We cannot separate the events of October from the year of the great change, as revisionism of all sorts so desperately argues. When we celebrate the October revolution, we are upholding the year of the great change as the materialization of its transformational potential.

The construction of socialism in the Soviet Union fulfills the revolutionary essence of the October Revolution. Without the victorious construction of socialism, without the leap forward of 1929, the events of 1917 would have been reduced to the Bolshevik Coup, as opposed to the Great October Socialist Revolution as it is revered today. We are here consciously making a distinction between the Coup and the Socialist Revolution. The former is the necessary, but not sufficient condition for the latter. To separate the October coup from the year of the great change is tantamount to negating its true revolutionary character. Revisionism for political reasons upholds Lenin on the surface. Similarly, the October Revolution is adulterated by isolating it from the History of the Soviet Union.

The process initiated in 1929 led to the construction of socialism in the main in the Soviet Union. The enacting of the socialist constitution of 1936 marks this momentous event in the History of the Soviet Union. This entails the liquidation of exploiting classes leading to a society with non-antagonistic class relations. Two are the main classes: the working class and the peasantry. This is the reason why socialism is declared in the main, in that two non-antagonistic classes remain linked to two types of property. Two forms of property exist: the socialized sector, owned by the entire society through the socialist state, and the collective sector owned by the cooperatives. Despite the presence of two forms of property, the economy functions as a cohesive whole under the stewardship of a centralized plan. The relationship between the socialized and the agricultural sectors is of a different nature compared to that characteristic to the period of the NEP. Here, the socialized sector retains the property of the main means of production, the machinery, in the form of machine tractor stations (MTS). This link plays a pivotal role in the elevation of the collective form of property to the level of the socialization. As a matter of fact, the economic reforms of the second half of the 1950s eventually resulted in the transfer of the MTS to the collective farms long before these were socialized, thus compromising the socialist character of the economic ties between industry and agriculture.

The victory of the construction of socialism in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, the establishment of socialism in the main, as detailed above, signifies the correctness of the Leninist thesis concerning the

feasibility of the construction of socialism in one country.⁵ Is this for this reason that the period of the 1930s has been so much demonized by Trotskyism, Perestroika and the ideologists of the bourgeoisie. No period of modern History has been so viciously tarnished through falsification and misrepresentation of facts than the Soviet Union in the 1930s. Extravagant reports of the alleged demise of tens of millions of Soviet citizens have made it to countless history books. The bourgeois media consistently propagates myths regarding millions of people being subjected to repressions, labour camps, famines etc. Indeed there were difficulties along the path of such a fundamental transformation of society. It would be naïve to think that the massive collectivization went smoothly everywhere in the country. Massive collectivization entailed the liquidation of the kulaks as a class and overcoming some aspects of the backwardness inherent to the petty producer. There is little question that remnants of capitalist thinking existed in the city, even within the party, especially in the 1920s. The class struggle in the Soviet Union did not end with the civil war. It continued in different forms through the 1920s and it intensified as the Soviet Government engaged in a stu-

⁵ At this point it is important to make a clarification with regards to what we refer here as the implementation of Lenin's plans for the construction of socialism in the Soviet Union. Indeed, Lenin made a thorough and systematic theoretical effort to establish the guidelines of the transitional period. That said, the Bolshevik party had to creatively approach these theoretical theses in the course of the social and economic transformations that unfolded. For instance, in early 1930s it was concluded that the most appropriate form of association for the peasantry to collectivize is the agricultural artel, as opposed to the commune. The agricultural artel, which has a precedent in pre-revolutionary Russia, allows the peasant to own certain means of production that are significant, but not essential: "The main link of the collective-farm movement, its predominate form at the present moment, the link which has to be grasped now, is the agricultural artel.

In the agricultural artel, the basic means of production, primarily for grain-farming — labour, use of the land, machines and other implements, draught animals and farm buildings — are socialised. In the artel, the house-hold plots (small vegetable gardens, small orchards) the dwelling houses, a part of the dairy cattle, small livestock, poultry, etc., are not socialized." (J.V. Stalin, "Dizzy with Success" Works, Vol. 12, pp. 197-205, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1955).

pendous offensive for the construction of socialism. The accomplishment of such a historical feat would have been impossible without strife. And that included elements from the opposition engaging in outright terrorist activities that could not go unpunished. But to argue that the Soviet population as a whole underwent terrible sufferings and deprivation is simply defamatory. Were these allegations to hold water, the victory over Nazi Germany, that required the overwhelming majority of the Soviet people to be solidly united around its government, would have not been possible. No documentary proof of such allegations ever emerged under the Gorbachov-Yakovlev clique, or after the demise of the Soviet Union, not for the lack of effort on the part of the Russian bourgeoisie. The Russian bourgeoisie was highly interested in discrediting the Soviet period that Marxist-Leninists regard as socialist. As it failed to bring to light proof of the alleged crimes, the Russian bourgeoisie today has turned around to commend some of the accomplishments of the Soviet period for populist purposes.

The bourgeoisie becomes hysterical when it comes to demonizing the victory of the construction of socialism in the Soviet Union. In fact, this makes a whole lot of sense. The bourgeoisie and its agents among the ranks of revisionism continue to make every possible effort to cover up the fact that socialism became a reality, that capitalism is doomed and is to be replaced by a different form of social and economic organization not based on the exploitation of man by man, that is superior and sustainable. The working class should not be intimidated when the bourgeoisie and its agents in the form of revisionism so viciously attack the History of the Soviet Union. On the very contrary, it should be seen as a sign of weakness



in that they are trying to conceal from the working class the key to their own demise. The bourgeoisie invests incalculable resources to confuse the toiling masses regarding the inevitability of capitalism. Demonizing the History of the Soviet Union, in particular the 1930s, is an essential ingredient to this campaign. It is for this reason that on this 100th anniversary of the October Revolution, communists should uphold the victory of the construction of socialism in the Soviet Union more than ever. The construction of socialism in the Soviet Union is the most important achievement of the October Revolution.

With the successful construction of socialism in the main, plans were made for the gradual transition to communism. This speaks to the fact that the Party was already of the opinion that communism, at least its lowest or less developed forms, could be in fact be constructed in one country and under the conditions of capitalist encirclement. Needless to say, the State, the armed forces would need to exist for as long as the capitalism encirclement remains a determining factor. Significant resources would still need to be devoted to the defence of the country. The restoration of capitalism remains a concern for as long as capitalism in its imperialist form is impelled to pressure the socialist State.

The plans for the construction of communism in the Soviet Union were abruptly interrupted by the Nazi invasion of June 1941. The economics of the war period are of a different nature from that of peaceful development. The ideologists of the bourgeoisie overlook the economic aspects of the Second World War, and for good reasons. Most of the emphasis in the historical analysis of the war in the East has been given to the military campaigns. While the military aspects of the war remain a fascinating topic, it would be a serious mistake not to appreciate the critical relevance of the formidable strength of the socialist economy over capitalism. The victory over Nazi Germany was a combination of the heroism of millions of Soviet soldiers and partisans, the skill of its commanders and the ability of Soviet industry to provide technologically superior armament in large enough quantities. The fact of the matter is that the Red Army became technologically superior in the main parameters to the point that the German army, which at the beginning of the campaign had become the most formidable army ever assembled, was not only defeated, it was overwhelmed. This materializes the economic superiority of socialism over capitalism.

Socialist economic relations unleash the creativity of the masses within the productive process. The period of socialism in the Soviet Union in the 1930s-50s became an epitome for the engagement of vast layers of the toiling masses in the increase of labour productivity and innovation, never seen before in History. This aspect of the socialist economy was concealed in the Soviet Union during the revisionist period. The economic reforms of the 1950s were essential in liquidating the participation of the toiling masses in the growth of labour productivity. The slowdown, stagnation and technological backwardness characteristic to the revisionist period was an embarrassment to the revisionist leadership. In contrast, the ability of Soviet industry to implement innovations in production was such that by the end of the war plans by the Western allies to attack the Red Army in Europe were deemed unviable from the military standpoint.⁶

Whereas the victory over Nazi Germany represents a major milestone in the History of socialism in the Soviet Union, the stupendous economic success that followed has no less importance from the standpoint upheld here. The Great Patriotic War, as the war is referred to in Russia, was a demonstration of the ability of the socialist economic system to overwhelm the capitalist war economy of Nazi Germany, together with its satellites and collaborators. It was in the period that followed up until sometime in the end of the 1950s, where the socialist economy was given a chance to develop in peaceful conditions, that its superiority with respect to capitalism became even more glaring. Quite a number of historians and economists in Russia today have labelled this period as the golden era of the Soviet Union. While not coming from Marxist positions, these intellectuals have admitted that the economy, including the standard of living of the toiling masses, was growing faster than in the developed capitalist countries despite massive devastation of vast territories during the war.

⁶ Secret documents declassified in the late 1990s indicate that Winston Churchill instructed the British Chief of Staff to design a plan to fight the Red Army with the intention to gain control over Eastern Europe. This included recruiting remnants of the Nazi army alongside British and American forces to engage the Soviets. The operation had the code name Unthinkable. The plan to confront the Soviets was eventually dropped due to the insurmountable superiority of the Red Army.

Many have already understood the intentions lurking behind the visceral and tedious anti-Stalinism of modern revisionism, Perestroika and imperialism. By means of fabrication and falsification, imperialism diverts the attention of the working class from the extensive historical material that speaks to the fact that Socialism is not only sustainable, but also superior to capitalism. The overwhelming facts pertaining to the economic development of the Soviet Union in the years that followed the war are a necessary by-product of the victory of Socialism in the 1930s. The strong expansion of the Soviet Economy until the 1950s was made possible by the socialist foundations laid in the 1930s. To argue differently is not only anti-Marxist and anti-communist, but in the Russian context is anti-patriotic.

The Soviet Union was the first country significantly affected by the war to liquidate rationing. This was announced jointly with a monetary reform on December 14, 1947, which was implemented two days later. In comparison, the UK liquidated rationing in 1954, despite the assistance of the US and the fact that, as a country it was not as affected by the war as the USSR was. The Soviet Gosplan published a report on January 18, 1948 regarding the performance of agriculture and industry during the last quarter of 1947. It was then announced that the Soviet Economy had reached the pre-war level even before required by the fourth Five-Year plan of 1946-1950, while industrialized capitalist countries would not reach that level until sometime in the 1950s.

Following of the reconstruction of the main economic parameters by 1947, the Soviet Union displayed high rates of economic growth based on fast growth of the production of the means of production (group "A") and large capital investment. For instance, the production of the means of production grew in 1950 by 78% with respect to 1940. The corresponding growth in 1955 with respect to 1950 was 83%. The rate of growth for the production of means of consumption (group "B") for the two periods mentioned above were 23% and 81%, respectively. The rate of industrial growth during the first half of the 1950s ranged from 12% to 16%. With respect to 1928 the production of group "A" and group "B" had grown in 1955 by 38.9 and 9.1 times, respectively.⁷ The growth in agricul-

⁷ Western economists have always criticized the Soviet economy on the grounds that it allegedly did not given enough emphasis to or

tural production (including cattle) was at a significantly lower rate with respect to industrial production. The gross agricultural product in 1950 remained at a level similar to that of 1940,⁸ whereas in 1955 it grew with respect to 1950 by 21%. The aggregate agricultural production in 1955 was 40% higher with respect to 1928, despite the massive outflow of farm workers to the cities.

Of particular importance was the development of science and technology, technology transfer and innovation. This was critical during the war and was unleashed to a greater potential during the years of peace. The growth of labour productivity became eventually determined by the ability to innovate in the process of production on the basis of increased mechanization and complexity.

The backwardness of the Soviet computing industry in the 1970s-80s with respect to the West was proverbial to the point that many in the Soviet Union accepted the superiority of Western technology as a matter of fact. This was not the case in the 1950s. S.A. Lebedev, independently from John von Neumann, developed the basic principles for the functioning of computers. In parallel to Lebedev, I.S. Bruk developed an independent series of computers, also from scratch. Under the leadership of N.P. Brusentsov the first ternary (as opposed to computers based on binary logic) computer was built in 1958. While the transistor based on semi-conductors was

even neglected the production of means of consumption and agriculture. The victory of the socialist economy over capitalism lies in its superior ability to improve labour productivity with rates higher than in capitalism. This can only be sustained over a long period of time on the basis of implementation of high technology in production. That necessarily implies that the rate of growth of group “A” has to be faster, so that it eventually provides the material basis for the increase of productivity in group “B” and agriculture. As a result of the rate of growth of group “A” other sectors of the economy grow as well. The end result is that the Soviet economy was growing faster than the bulk of the developed capitalist economies. The relative balance between the different sectors of the economy depends on a multiplicity of factors.

⁸ It is probably relevant to note that 1940 was a particularly good year for agriculture with respect to previous years. In contrast, 1946 was marked by severe drought that strongly affected the harvesting of grain in Moldavia, the Ukraine, central areas of Russia, Povolzhe and northern Caucasus.

invented in 1948 in the US, Soviet scientists and industry quickly pushed large production of semi-conductors based on electronics components with prices significantly lower than in the US. In general, the Soviet electronics industry in the 1950s was well competitive with that in the US.

While the first atomic bomb (fission-based) was assembled in the US, the first hydrogen bomb was detonated in 1953 in the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was the first country to construct nuclear power stations for peaceful purposes. The first nuclear plant was put into operation in the summer of 1954 in Obninsk under the leadership of I. Kurchatov. The Soviet Union expanded the use of nuclear power for peaceful purposes. For instance, the first nuclear ice-breaker was launched in 1957 and completed in 1959.

We got accustomed to the fact that the most power particle accelerators are located in the US or Europe. The Soviet physicist V.I. Veksler led the invention of the synchrotron principle of acceleration of particles in 1944, before his American counterparts. He led the construction of what became the most powerful particle accelerator in the world in 1957, the synchrophasotron, located at the Joint Institute of Nuclear Research in the city of Dubna. This accelerator was able to accelerate protons to the record energy of 10 billion volts and continued to function into the 2000s. Fundamental research became world class. A number of Soviet physicists, P.A. Cherenkov, I.M. Frank, I.Y. Tamm, L.D. Landau, A.M. Prokhorov, N.G. Basov, P.L. Kapitsa, were awarded Nobel prizes, despite adverse politics.

The development of rocket technology in the Soviet Union is well known. The first artificial Earth satellite was launched by the Soviet Union in October 1957, stunning the world. The Sputnik 1 circulated with an low elliptical Earth orbit and was able to transmit radio waves that could be detected on the surface of Earth. The West was stunned at the achievement.

These are emblematic achievements that far from exhaust the list of accomplishments. They bear witness to the type of economic development that the socialist economy was pursuing: not just any industrialization, but industrialization on the basis of high-technology and innovation with the intention to achieve the highest labour productivity.

Overall, the economic growth of the USSR in the 1950s was 2 to 3 times faster than that of the US, where the gap with regard to

industrial production was larger. Many in the US were seriously concerned that should the USSR sustain the economic growth of the post-war period, US national security would be severely compromised. In addition, it is important to note that the world during the period described here was very different from what we have today. It was even quite different from the 1970s-80s. Large sectors of the world population had voluntarily abandoned the capitalist market by embracing socialist construction in Eastern Europe and China. It was reasonable for the Americans to assume that the economic growth in these countries would emulate that of the Soviet Union. The available economic data of the 1950s corroborates this statement. The colonial system was crumbling at a fast pace. Many liberation and progressive movements looked up to the Soviet Union as a beacon of social justice and liberation from exploitation. The Soviet Union epitomized for them the hope that backward countries under the yoke of imperialism had a well-defined path towards national liberation and prosperity. A number of intellectuals in the West risked their lives to assist the Soviet Union in different ways, including spying, for no monetary or any other kind of material compensation. They did it out of conviction and admiration. Many at that time believe that the victory of socialism over capitalism on a world scale was not a matter of if, but of when and how. There is little doubt that had the Soviet Union not taken the course towards dismantling the economic basis of socialism, as triggered by the economic reforms of the second half of the 1950s, the world would be in a very different place today.

In recent years the CIA has been declassifying documents pertaining to the cold war period. Particularly enlightening are documents from the 1950s where CIA analysts provide detailed reports on the development of the Soviet economy. The director of the CIA at the time, A.W. Dulles, was a fanatic anti-communist, as is well documented. That said, he shared the concerns of many pertaining to the alarming economic growth of the Soviet Union and corresponding mid to long-term implications. We could not but commend the obvious:

“During the more than quarter of a century that has passed since the consolidation of Stalin’s power position in 1928, the Soviet Union has risen from the status of a relatively underdeveloped country to unquestioned rank as the second largest economy in the world. This growth, even more remarkable considering the destructive ef-

fects of World War II, has been achieved by the transfer of millions of workers from agriculture to urban occupations. At the same time a prodigious effort has been made to educate large number of Soviet citizens in modern skills and technology, and an unusually large portion of total national product has been devoted to investment” (“The Economy and Scientific Manpower Resources of the Soviet Union”, A.W. Dulles, address delivered to the Industrial Associates of the California Institute of Technology, New York City, January 31, 1956, approved for release by CIA 09/01/2000).

He goes further, not without criticism of course, to acknowledge the ability of the Soviet Union to perform cutting edge research and the successful implementation of educational and training programmes. His report is consistent with Soviet official statistics on the subject. The intelligence community was greatly concerned with the achievements of the Soviet Union to the point of obsession. To the credit of the CIA and other analysts in the US, the Americans had noticed a significant change in the economic policies of the Soviet Union in the second half of the 1950s. In newly declassified documents, the term “new course” is used to denote a “new era” of New Economic Policy. As they did not come from Marxist positions, they did not appreciate the anti-socialist content of the economic reforms of the 1950s. It was however noticed that the development of heavy industry had slowed down in favour of light industry and agriculture. That said, the overall economic growth still remained strong all throughout the 1950s and significantly faster than that of the US.

The possibility of the Soviet Union to overtake the economy of the US was not only discussed within the intelligence community. A number of prominent economists had been vocal with calculations pertaining to the date when the Soviet Union’s Gross National Product (GNP) would match that of the US. For instance, renowned American economist Paul Samuelson, father of neo-Keynesianism, and a Nobel Prize winner, quantified the data when he would expect the Soviet Union’s GNP to surpass that of the US. In his famous textbook *Economics* he argued that the USSR would catch up as early as in 1984. Samuelson had the honesty to admit that the so called “socialist command economy can function or even thrive”, not without criticism from his peers. The relevance of this statement does not lie in the exact date, or even the details of the estimates. It lies in the fact that the strength of the Soviet economy had become a

generally accepted fact in the West in the 1950s. The Soviet economic “threat” gradually winded down, as the economic reforms of the 1950s and 1960s took effect, eventually leading to a very different perception that now lies at the heart of the bourgeois propaganda against national liberation and the construction of socialism in one country.

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Italy

Communist Platform – for the Communist Party of the Proletariat of Italy

The Rise of Bourgeois Nationalism and the Tasks of the Revolutionary Proletariat

A growing phenomenon at the international level

The venom of bourgeois nationalism is again poisoning the international political atmosphere. For the first time since the Second World War the big imperialist powers and the rising ones, the big and little capitalist countries run by conservative and reactionary forces, are pervaded at the same time by many forms of chauvinism.

From the USA of Trump to the Russia of Putin, from the Japan of Abe to the Turkey of Erdogan, from the China of Xi Jinping to the India of Modi, from Poland to Switzerland, from France to Germany, from Belgium to Austria, as far as Eastern Europe, in many imperialist and capitalist countries a wave of bourgeois nationalism, of fanatical patriotism, is arising.

The present situation, characterized by the severe consequences of the economic crisis of 2008, by unequal development, by the sharp struggle for markets, for raw materials and spheres of influence, favours the spread of chauvinism among the dominant nations and the dominated ones.

Generally, the parties and movements that give expression to a nationalist and chauvinist policy are increasing their influence among the subordinate classes and are assuming a growing political and electoral weight.

The USA of Trump, an imperialist country in decline, is the herald of this dangerous phenomenon. Behind the slogan “Make America Great Again”, we are seeing a remarkable change of line followed by US imperialism, both in home politics and at the international level.

Donald Trump became President after an electoral campaign characterized by nationalism in its most poisonous forms. His extreme political, economic, cultural nationalism, that goes along with the white racism and Islamophobia, expresses a chauvinist and ultra-reactionary conception of the world. Typical of the Trump government is the tendency to give priority to the national interest, to

economic protectionism, in order to defend the profits of US monopolies and to weaken the rival powers.

Without doubt the ultra-nationalist and fiercely counter-revolutionary politics of Trump favour the spread of this poison in other countries.

In Germany the party of the extreme right, nationalist and fascist, the AFD (Alternative For Germany), is now the third largest parliamentary party.

In Italy the nationalist beast, which sees its most violent expression in the fascist groups, is again raising its head with demagogic arguments against immigrants and the “national humiliation”.

In social-imperialist China too, great-State chauvinism has become so aggressive that the revisionist CPC (which has always revealed openly nationalist positions internally) is having difficulty controlling that trend, after having favoured it for decades, especially in school-programs, in which millions of children daily receive massive doses of patriotic education in order to undo the humiliation of foreign occupation and to exalt the Han nationality.

Vladimir Putin is also a nationalist; he is championing a Russia characterized by a mix of Slavic tradition and orthodox Christianity.

The nature and aims of bourgeois nationalism

Bourgeois nationalism is an aggressive policy of the ruling class in the sphere of the internal relations of their national States and towards other nations that has its basis in the exploitation of the working class, the rivalry between capitalists and the subjugation of oppressed countries.

The development of bourgeois nationalism has many definite manifestations and consequences in the field of the home and foreign policy of the imperialist and capitalist countries.

First, it is a tool in the hands of the exploiting and reactionary classes to divide and corrupt the working class, prevent its union to demolish capitalism, undermine the solidarity of the workers and the peoples with lethal prejudices.

Second, it is a means for the preservation and strengthening of capitalism and the bourgeois dictatorship, where a small handful of profit-makers rules society and uses the State machine to crush the working people.

Third, bourgeois nationalism creates a sharper international situation and increases the danger of new armed conflicts between

imperialist and capitalist powers. It is one of the deadliest weapons in the hands of the most reactionary, chauvinist and warmongering elements of financial capital, it represents their interests, to advance their policy of war against the workers and peoples.

This political ideology, under whatever mask it hides, from the demagoguery of national honour to the respect of the “rights” of the stronger nations, is always connected to the robber’s war of imperialism. It is a direct impulse to militarism, to rearmament, to neo-colonialism, to annexations, to the affirmation of the supremacy of the stronger nations; therefore it is a powerful motivator for oppression and genocide against other peoples. It is an integral part of the preparation of the masses for a war aiming at a new division of the world and to prevent the development of a large anti-imperialist movement.

Today, just as yesterday, bourgeois chauvinism is a dangerous menace to the working class and the oppressed peoples.

In a situation of worsening inter-imperialist contradictions, the bourgeoisie of the ruling powers regards the “defence of the national interests” as the pretext for conducting a criminal policy of oppression and exploitation of its own peoples, and of despoliation and enslavement of other peoples.

Therefore, the chauvinism of the imperialist and capitalist countries, the spur to organize the class around national institutions and the “fatherland” of the exploiters, will be increasingly the fundamental nucleus of any bourgeois policy.

Some characteristics of the present bourgeois nationalism

Although bourgeois nationalism is a phenomenon that has different conditions and takes specific forms in various countries, reflecting the positions of the reactionary classes, their interests, the traditions and tactics in the struggles against their enemies inside and outside, etc., it is still possible to point out, especially in the imperialist and capitalist countries governed by reactionary, populist and militarist parties, some common elements of this tendency.

- A growing economic protectionism and commercial obstructionism (duties, protective rules, state intervention, etc.), to control the means of production, help the national enterprises and prevent the penetration of other States into the internal market, in the conditions of a constriction of world trade and in the conditions of a merciless competition among international monopolies and imperialist

countries.

- The recovery of the national “greatness” and sovereignty against the “globalization of the markets”, the hostility towards the supranational institutions of financial capital that limit or remove powers, resources and spaces for the dominant classes of various countries.

- The tendency to ignore laws, treaties and international agreements (political, commercial, juridical, etc.), fully breaking them or violating them in individual cases.

- The creation of “fortress States”, the closing and armed defence of the frontiers (for instance, in the EU this means “to bury Schengen”) in order to prevent the entrance of “the others”.

- The xenophobia and intolerance towards the workers coming from other countries, represented as “invaders” and “enemies”; the discriminatory practices against foreigners.

- The idea that the State territory must give hospitality only to one nationality; the suppression of the rights of the national and ethnic minorities.

- The construction of a national history through the myth of common descent; the falsification, historical revisionism, anti-scientific and reactionary ideas (“purity of blood”, the rediscovery of the “chosen” peoples, etc.).

- The defence of the traditional religion (Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, etc.) and its conservative values, against the penetration of other religions.



The relation between chauvinism, neoliberal policy and the economic crisis

The present bourgeois nationalism is not conceivable as a simple “return to the past”. We have to understand it in relation to its class roots, the movement of the classes and their struggle in the present context.

The growing influence of nationalism and chauvinism cannot be explained by a late rediscovery of the national identity (just as modern racism is not based on “biological prejudices”, but on cultural elements); on the other hand it must be explained by the political importance that nationalism acquires in a society ravaged by decades of new free-trade policies, by the destruction caused by the recent world capitalist crisis, by the hyper-competition for markets and spheres of influence, by the increase in the contradictions between the imperialist and capitalist powers, by the mass migrations produced by imperialism.

The wave of nationalist and chauvinist feelings that arises in many countries is nourished by the sense of rancour, powerlessness, and the rejection of the policies imposed by international financial capital and its institutions (cuts to social expenditures, assaults on the rights of workers, privatisation, bail-outs of banks, etc.), combined with the fear of a further worsening of the conditions of life and work. This feeling is particularly widespread among the western middle-classes that are losing many positions acquired in the earlier historical period.

In conformity with this point of view, the present warlike and xenophobic nationalism is a reply of some sectors of the dominant class to the crisis of the free-trade-policy model, for managing in a chauvinist and reactionary manner both the discontent and social protest and the mass nationalist and patriotic feelings, attributing the present problems to external factors (first to immigrants “invaders”).

In Europe the bourgeois nationalist forces have found a fertile field owing to the austerity and neoliberal politics, as well as to the unbridled collaborationism of the traditional social-democratic forces.

Their growth happened after and the exhaustion of the attempt of the radicalized “left-wing” petty-bourgeoisie to guide the social protests (Podemos, Syriza, etc.). These nationalist right-wing forces

with their populist and xenophobic demagogy have exploited the anti-globalization feelings and worries of the working masses, taking up the political space of the traditional liberal and reformist parties, which, in order to maintain big capital, have eliminated the rights of the workers, unemployed, young people, pensioners and women, and completely abandoned the anti-fascist principles, spreading reactionary and racist positions among the masses.

With great benefit for themselves, the liberal and reformist parties have defined the mass movements against the EU, the TTIP, the austerity measures, the war policy of NATO as “nationalist” and “protectionist”. So the reactionary and fascist forces have the opportunity of presenting themselves as “the true defenders of the nation” against the globalization.

In fact, the bourgeois nationalist parties, while increasing their prestige with slogans such as “masters in one’s own home”, do not give up the free-trade policy, do not want the recovery by the working class of the conquests lost because of the action of the liberal-democratic parties, and are even incapable of lightening the conditions of life of the great masses. On the contrary, they are ready to increase the authoritarianism, to destroy the workers’ organisations and sharpen the discriminations against the poorest and the immigrants.

The policy of these reactionary forces, even if they say that they will defend the victims of globalization, is always devoted to the defence of some section of the imperialist bourgeoisie (especially the sector of it tied to the military-industrial complex) and centred on the working of the capitalist market and on the strengthening of the State as the fundamental tool for the support of the monopolies in the international competition and the apparatus for the repression of the exploited masses.

So they are parties that interpret in a nationalist sense the free-trade policy (national-free-trade policy), with a clear tendency to economic protectionism, to the cuts to social expenditure, to institutional conservatism and to the war policy abroad.

The nefarious role of social-democracy

A particular role in the spread of nationalist ideas and in the clouding of the workers’ conscience is played by the social-democratic leaders, genuine specialists in the spreading of confusion and division in the ranks of the working class.

For many decades the social-democratic leaders covered their nationalism with talk about “our common western values” and Europeanism, spreading concepts and programs better fitting the requirements of monopoly capital.

In the last years the music has changed and their nationalist policy has revealed itself, especially towards foreign workers. Gradually the social-democrats have opened the way to the fascists and racists, stating that they were no longer dangerous.

Today the social-democrats enter into direct competition with the nationalist and fascist right-wing forces that are acting openly and are spreading their delirious chauvinist and xenophobic discourses.

The social-democratic and reformist ministers have even managed to criminalize altruism and solidarity, as with the NGOs that save the lives of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea.

In all countries the leaders of the social-democratic parties support the measures of the exploiting classes and apply them directly when they are in the government. They demand great sacrifices from the workers in the name of “national unity”, “sense of duty”, etc.

In every country they share with the right-wing parties the policy of keeping the migrants far from their boundaries, at the cost of



Sign reads: "I accuse private property of depriving us of everything!!"

havoc of the sea and crimes in the detention camps.

In all countries they cover the imperialist wars of aggression with their sugary rhetoric, presenting them as “humanitarian” actions or “struggles against terrorism”.

Without the aid of the social-democratic and reformist parties, the bourgeoisie could not conduct its anti-workers, reactionary and warmongering policy. Social-democracy is based on nationalism, not on proletarian internationalism. This political movement has always adopted nationalism to instil bourgeois patriotic sentiments into the minds of the working class, celebrating the victories in the imperialist wars, exalting the values of the bourgeois armed forces, spreading the cult of love for the imperialist fatherland, etc. Therefore there is no essential difference between the demagogy of the social-democratic leaders and that of the bourgeois nationalists.

They both strive with every means to keep the working masses away from the class struggle against the capitalists, divide and corrupt the workers and poison the popular masses with their reactionary ideology. Both undermine the class conscience of the exploited with their demagogy about “common national interests”. Both try to present the interests of the capitalists and those of the workers as one and the same.

The rise of bourgeois nationalism is parallel to the sharpening of the crisis of old social-democracy (as in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, etc.). This crisis, started in the 1980s and destined to last a long time, is the result of the end of the “Golden Age of capitalism” and of the predominance of the free-trade policy, to which social-democracy has adjusted itself with a policy of submission to the financial oligarchy, with the liquidation of the Welfare State, with a series of counter-reforms, with the weakening of the mass trade-unions.

This has led substantial sectors of the workers and the working masses to lose confidence in the social-democratic parties, to criticize them harshly and to abandon them on the electoral and organisational level.

Today the mass discontent is captured by the populist and fascist right-wing parties, which use aggressive nationalism as one of the major vehicles of their policy. Also from this point of view we must denounce the fact that the social-democrats have opened the door to the rising wave of bourgeois nationalism. The two phenomena are interlinked.

It is foreseeable that the more unprejudiced social-democratic sectors will move to a further right-wing position, establishing their own nationalism and fascistisation (in the form of a “left”, “radical” nationalism, etc.), manipulating some backward sectors of the proletariat and co-operating with the forces of the more extreme reaction.

The “defence of national unity” with the imperialists

As we have already said, nationalism is one of the methods preferred by the ruling classes in order to divide and immobilize the workers and take them out of the revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie, through the spreading of ideas and doctrines aimed at weakening and denying the struggles of the exploited and oppressed classes against capitalism, and replacing them with the struggle among the exploited and oppressed people.

The principal aim of bourgeois nationalism is to cause the division and breaking up of the proletariat under the more deceptive pretexts, as, for instance, the defence of the interests of the nation, the defence of the culture and the identity of the peoples.

One of the tactics preferred by the bourgeoisie is the proclamation of the sacred “national unity”, of “national defence”.

These proclamations aim to instil in large sections of the proletariat the idea that there can exist common interests between antagonistic classes, that there can be a just war lead by the bourgeoisie.

So they serve to spread confusion and division in the ranks of the working class and to prevent it from taking up independent and revolutionary positions hoisting the flag of proletarian internationalism.

The bourgeois slogans about national unity favour the establishment of “states of emergency” in which the freedoms of the workers are suppressed; these “states of emergency” are the prelude to the calls to arms of the proletarians for the war of their own imperialism against other imperialisms, nations and peoples.

In order to get these reactionary slogans accepted by the popular masses, the bourgeoisie creates the impression that there are good nations and bad nations (“rogue States”), there are peoples with violent characteristics, peoples evil by nature. The ruling class hides its responsibility in the aggression wars against other peoples under a thick demagogic curtain, in the war crimes that it perpetrates, claiming that imperialism is not the cause of the problems, the bourgeoisie is not the principal enemy of the proletarians, but other nations and social groups, while it claims to defend peace,

freedom, democracy, etc. In this way the ruling classes of the opposing camp are encouraged to do the same thing, resulting in the peoples being driven to the slaughter.

In reality, the imperialist bourgeoisie has nothing to do with the true national interests; it is in direct conflict with them. It is a parasite in the belly of the nations, and its agents are dangerous extraneous bodies in the ranks of proletariat.

Only the interests of the working class, its proletarian internationalism, are in harmony with the interests of the oppressed nations and peoples.

The tasks of communists and of class-conscious workers

In the present situation of economic, political and social instability of world capitalism, of the sharpening of all its contradictions, the revolutionary proletariat must face the inescapable task of stressing the struggle against national-chauvinism and the menace of fascism, increasing the activity in the ranks of the working class and among the popular masses, maintaining the firm commitment to revolution and socialism.

As comrade Lenin taught us, we have the task of struggling daily and concretely against every form of bourgeois nationalism. It must do this against the warlike, violent, openly chauvinist nationalism, or the more sophisticated nationalism which hides behind calls to “equality” of nations” while it promotes the division of the working class according to nationality, or finally against the social-chauvinism of the reformists and opportunists.

In this struggle the principal task is the education of the workers and the exploited and oppressed working masses in the spirit of proletarian internationalism and of the international solidarity of the workers and peoples.

The communists must show in practice that the working class is conducting a resolute struggle for the solidarity, closeness and union of the proletarians of all countries and all nationalities, for the unity of the class struggle against the common enemy, world imperialism, against national oppression and in defence of brotherhood and national equality. This task is even more important today, in a situation in which the inter-imperialist conflicts become more acute.

It is necessary to conduct the struggle against nationalism connecting the ideological aspect to the concrete and urgent demands of the workers, according to the present level of class consciousness

and sentiments of the masses.

We have to oppose the chauvinist propaganda and conduct counter-propaganda in a simple way, understandable to the young workers and the unemployed, to the poor people, putting their real interests at the centre of our action.

Clearly, fighting against bourgeois chauvinism does not mean offending the feelings and national pride of the great working masses; it does not mean falling into national nihilism. On the contrary, we must explain that the bourgeoisie and fascism cause the ruin of the nation, that proletarian internationalism and socialist revolution mean the salvation of the nation and of popular culture, their free and independent development. Likewise, fighting against chauvinism must not make us forget the indispensability of support for national liberation movements of the oppressed countries which tend to strike, weaken and break down imperialism.

In our propaganda we have to clarify the class character of chauvinism, the pillar of bourgeois tyranny, and its ruinous consequences for the workers. We have to explain that in “the first place” the policy of the bourgeois nationalist forces is not the national interest, and even less the interests of the workers, but the profits of the monopoly groups that support these forces. We have to demand the regularisation and parity of wages and rights for immigrant workers, the abrogation of the racist laws and measures. This is very important, in consideration of the economic and social basis of present-day nationalism.

The revolutionary proletariat must be the pioneer of the unity of the working class in the struggle against every form of chauvinism, national hate, racial and religious prejudice, the most determined defender of the oppressed nations, the pioneer of the struggle by all means of the dependent and colonial countries against imperialism.

What is necessary is to work, in each context, in order to unmask all the social-patriotic, chauvinist and bourgeois nationalist positions and phrases, and to explain that the freedom and independence of nations are unthinkable without the revolutionary break with imperialism, without the defeat of the bourgeoisie of the oppressor and oppressed countries.

In the imperialist countries it is necessary to oppose utterly the policy of the “sacred union”, of the “governments of national unity”, of “national emergency” and of “national defence”, spreading and sustaining the slogan “NO to national unity with the imperialists”.

Most of all in the imperialist countries, in the oppressing and war-mongering States, it is necessary to struggle resolutely against all types of occupation and imperialist violence – first of all the violence of one’s own imperialism – for the independence of the colonies and the liberation of the oppressed nations, for the complete equality of rights of nations, for the right of self-determination, up to secession, for all the oppressed nations, for the sovereignty, freedom and national independence of the peoples against the oppression and the exploitation of imperialism and capitalism.

The aid to the struggles for the self-determination of the peoples is a constant of internationalist practice. Only the revolutionary policies of the proletariat defend in a consistent way the sovereignty, freedom and independence of the peoples, which coincides, in most cases, with the interests of the revolution and socialism. Therefore we have to call for the common struggles of the proletariat of the oppressor nations and of the revolutionary movements of the proletariat of the oppressed nations and colonies.

As far as concerns the struggle for peace and against imperialist war, we emphasize the necessity to concentrate the activity against the principal imperialist instigators of war at a particular moment, and the necessity to combine the struggle against the war with the struggle against reaction and fascism, to strengthen the struggle against the arms race among the imperialists, against the establishment of police States, for the withdrawal from the warmongering alliances (such as NATO) and the withdrawal of the troops sent abroad, for the support to the struggles and liberation wars of the peoples subjugated by imperialism.

We must give particular attention to the struggle against chauvinist ideology, in order to free the masses from xenophobic prejudices and to struggle against the preparation of a new world imperialist war.

It is up to us to fight the ideological mystifications and the falsifications of the history of the peoples, enlightening the working classes about the past, connecting the present struggles to the revolutionary traditions.

We have the task of mercilessly denouncing and unmasking the sophisms and rhetoric of the social-democrats and the trade union bureaucrats, the shameful class collaboration policy, the policy of sacrifices “for the national interest”, the social-patriotism, social-imperialism, pacifist phrases that mask the imperialist and war-

mongering plans of the bourgeoisie.

We must conduct this struggle with particular energy within the workers' movement and also within the ranks of the progressive and communist parties, chiefly in those that are working in the imperialist countries, in which the ideological influences and prejudices of the imperialist bourgeoisie and reformism are variously reflected.

Owing to the growth of chauvinism and fascism, the work for the development of the policy of a proletarian united front and, on its basis, of a popular front, is an imperative task for all communists and revolutionaries.

We have to try our best for the establishment of popular, anti-fascist and anti-imperialist fronts (or alliances, blocs, coalitions, etc.), which gather – under the leadership of the proletariat – the small farmers, the impoverished urban workers, the masses of the oppressed nationalities, the genuine progressive and democratic forces, on the basis of a program of specific demands of these sectors of workers, in line with the fundamental interests of the proletariat.

The decisive question for the formation of these popular fronts is the resolute action of the proletariat for the defence of its own interests in combination with the defence of the demands of the other exploited working people.

Clearly, in each country there exist a certain number of crucial questions, of fundamental demands, which the large masses of the workers support. The formation of the popular fronts can be accelerated around these demands.

January 2018

Ivory Coast

Revolutionary Communist Party of the Ivory Coast

The Ivory Coast Is Heading towards Chaos

The Ivory Coast is a backward capitalist country, dominated by the former colonial power, France, which retains control over all economic, political and cultural areas. Currency, defense and culture, due to the adoption of French as the official language, are exclusively in the domain of France, which has the largest share of financial capital invested here. All the governments, from Houphouet to Ouattara, have been subjected to it.

In addition to the French control over the Ivory Coast, our country is a prisoner of the Breton Wood institutions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). These institutions, to make the Ivory Coast repay the huge debts it has contracted, have imposed structural adjustment programs (SAPs) on our country, and forced it to sell off our national companies to the major international groups. All decisions and strategic orientations, all budgets and development plans are submitted to these institutions.

Since 1980, the prices of the main agricultural raw materials, the bases of the national economy, have drastically decreased, thus exhausting the public finances. This economic and financial crisis, as well as the struggles of the popular masses for freedoms and bread, caused a political crisis since 1990 which continues to deepen. The sectors of the upper bourgeoisie are fighting for state power by military actions; French imperialism is intervening militarily to impose its most faithful servants, the popular masses want to get out of imperialist domination, poverty and the state without rights; they are leading the fight for the anti-imperialist and popular revolution.

The current objective situation is one of chaos.

• The economic, political and social situation

The current economic situation is presented by experts from the IMF and the WB as among the most successful in Africa and among the most satisfactory in the Ivory Coast since 1994. The average growth rate from 2012 to 2017 has been 9%. These experts state that the Ivory Coast is on the eve of “emergence”: Mr. Ouattara’s slogan. But these same experts believe that Ivorian growth is not

inclusive, that is, it does not benefit the majority of the population. The 5th Africa Development International Forum (FIAD) held in Morocco on March 16 and 17, 2017, in which the Ivory Coast played a leading role, clearly states that “only true inclusiveness is the guarantee of lasting security of our continent.” When the experts of international finance capital make such remarks one must be concerned about the actual state of the country concerned.

Indeed, at the social level, while the Ivory Coast is getting richer, poverty rages everywhere in the towns as in the countryside. The social situation is worrying. For the year 2016 the poverty index was 46% (source: INSEE, National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies), the human development index was 0.46 (source: IMF / BM) ranking the Ivory Coast as 171st out of 187 countries in the world. Since 2016, the minimum wage of workers has been 60,000 CFA [550 CFA = \$1 US – *translator’s note*] per month, barely enough to pay one’s monthly rent (a room at 30,000 CFA on average in Abidjan) and a sack of rice (20,000 CFA). As can be seen, this salary is below what is needed to renew the labor force. As a result, in order to survive, workers sleep at the construction sites, eat one meal a day, and join their families in the shantytowns once a month. The peasants are not better off. They are experiencing a drastic fall in the prices of their products (the price of cocoa decreased 36% in 2018, the price of rubber has decreased 50% in the last 2 years, etc.). The low level of the wages of the workers, the fall in income of the peasants, the inflation of prices of the products and services of prime necessity, the evictions of the small traders from the sides of the roads and the precarious markets to leave the business to the supermarkets, the long-term unemployment, especially among the youths, reinforces poverty among the popular strata and naturally pushes them into the struggle. The paradox, the



economic growth and the aggravation of misery, is explained by the fact that this growth only benefits the multinationals and a tiny minority of the Ivorian population, the upper bourgeoisie at the head of the state, who take the markets for themselves little by little, overcharging for the products and services sold to the state, thus plundering the state coffers with total impunity.

At the political level, the Ivory Coast is a state without rights. The Ouattara government, stemming from the post-election war of 2010-2011 when French imperialism attacked the country militarily and imposed him on it, has shown itself to be an autocratic, repressive power. The new constitution of 2016 imposed by fraud and repression has reinforced the autocratic nature of his power. All institutions are constitutionally subject to him.

The repression of any hint of protest is commonplace and trivialized, as evidenced by the arrest of Mr. Gnanbo Kacou, former deputy of Adiaké, who was arrested by the investigation brigade of the gendarmerie for attempting to walk from Noé, a town on the border with Ghana, to Abidjan, to ask the people of the Ivory Coast to forgive each other; all demonstrations and protests of the opposition are considered as insurrections and unceremoniously repressed. Fundamental freedoms and democracy are royally flouted; political opponents are imprisoned without trial; convictions without a legal basis are pronounced against political prisoners. The practice of tribalism at the top of the state undermines peaceful coexistence between communities. Insecurity is spreading to every city and every region of the country.

It must be emphasized that this government is unable to deal with the social demands of civil servants; unable to resolve the intercommunity conflicts. Conflicts between communities over rural land are increasing throughout the Ivory Coast without lasting solutions. The western region is particularly affected by these conflicts. It is also important to note that the government is unable to protect the people against organized crime and criminals. Every day, hordes of young delinquents assault, kill and disappear, this phenomenon, a consequence of the war that occurred in the Ivory Coast from 1999 to 2011, seems to be beyond the means of law enforcement.

All in all, not only is the Ouattara government incapable of solving the problems of the citizens, but it is quick to violently silence all those who dare to complain.

Since he does not have to account for his administration, Ouattara sees no other way out of the current situation than the maintenance of his power against all odds. His supporters have already begun propaganda for a third term, in contradiction with the constitutional provisions: Crooked traditional and religious leaders are not hesitating to “wish” Alassane Ouattara a third term in, as they say to avoid chaos to Ivory Coast.

• **The struggles of the popular masses**

The long crisis of 1999 to 2011, characterized by the massive intervention of French imperialism and the massacres of the popular masses, caused a deep trauma among the people, which was accentuated by the policy of pacification of Ouattara’s government in order to control the people who do not support him.

But little by little, starting from late 2013, despite the repression, the trade union struggles have resumed and then the political struggles. These struggles have reached an considerable level since 2016, as evidenced by the struggles of the civil servants, the struggles against the autocratic constitution of the 3rd republic, the struggles of the peasants against the fall in cocoa prices, the struggles of students against rackets in the education sector; the struggles for transparent elections.

The situation in the Ivory Coast is bad; the country is heading towards chaos. All opposition political groups without exception agree with this diagnosis. Dissidents in the Rassemblement des



Houphouetistes pour la Démocratie et Paix (RHDP) (Union of Houphetists for Democracy and Peace), the party in power, do not say anything else either behind the scenes or in public.

The tactics of the PCRCI: For a revolutionary solution to the current crisis

• The summary of the objective situation

The objective situation can be summarized as follows: On the economic level, the situation is presented by the experts of the FM and BM as most satisfactory. But the same experts believe that Ivorian growth is not inclusive, that is, it does not benefit the majority of the population. While the Ivory Coast is getting richer, poverty is rife everywhere in the towns and in the countryside. The social situation is worrying.

Politically, the situation is most disastrous: repression, fundamental freedoms and democracy flouted; repeated violations of the constitution; incarceration of political opponents without trial; growing insecurity. Discontent is growing. In conclusion we are in a country where, despite high economic growth, the system is unable to feed, heal, educate or protect its population. We are in a system where freedoms are gagged. We are in a bankrupt economic and social system, which has exhausted its ability to maintain the labor force of the producers of wealth; in order to stay in power it is forced to resort to repression. Chaos is looming. Such a system must be swept away together with the power that embodies it. The people must completely break with this system.

The Ivory Coast is in crisis but the situation is not yet a revolutionary one.

Indeed, the poverty is great; the oppressed masses are awake and defying the government through struggles, by isolated attacks against the symbols of the state. There is growing discontent. But these struggles are not yet strong enough to block the normal functioning of the institutions. Dissent at the top of the state does not yet prevent these institutions from functioning.

One might think that we are in a situation of calm. In 1989, the institutions were functioning despite strikes and other forms of defiance of the Houphouet government, despite the demoralization that had won over a large number of members of the PDCI [Democratic Party of the Ivory Coast, founded by Houphouet – *translator's*

note]. But in 1990, a simple event, the cut to electric power at the university campus in Yopougon, set the tinder on fire. A general political protest movement shook the government that was forced to make concessions. The Ivory Coast then entered a revolutionary situation, which did not lead to revolution because the fundamental classes of the revolution, the workers and the poor peasants, served as crutches for the petty-bourgeois parties which only demanded political freedom. They did not have a political general staff. As Lenin said, there was not “the ability of the revolutionary *class* to take revolutionary mass action *strong* enough to break (or dislocate) the old government, which never, not even in a period of crisis, ‘falls,’ if it is not toppled over.” [“The Collapse of the Second International,” *Collected Works*, vol. 21, p. 214.]

The current turning point is characterized by an awakening of the struggles of the revolutionary classes and strata. But these struggles have not yet reached the level necessary to paralyze the sectors of production and the institutions of the state. The petty-bourgeois opposition is organizing to better position itself in future battles for state power. The revolutionary democracy under the leadership of the PCRCI is being built up. The challenge of the coming period is the question of political power.

• **The tactics of the PCRCI**

The fundamental classes of the revolution, the workers and peasants and their allies, will they take power to get the Ivory Coast out of chaos or will they once again serve as crutches for the reformist parties that are also seeking political power? Will the upper bourgeoisie, servants of imperialism, retain this power to perpetuate the neocolonial system, the source of the ills of Ivorian society? These are the stakes at the current period in light of the political struggles that are going on.

What can be done so that the fundamental classes of the revolution do not serve as a crutch for the petty-bourgeois movement, which is very active in the current political struggle? How can we make the expected revolution break out with the PCRCI as leader, representing the interests of the fundamental classes and their allies? These are the concerns of the PCRCI which has decided to work with self-sacrifice for a revolutionary solution to the current crisis. “Faced with the bankruptcy of the neocolonial system in the Ivory Coast, what are the tactics of the PCRCI for the revolution?” This is

the theme of the 5th ordinary party congress, which is being held on April 6 and 7, 2018.

The tactical political slogan to be put forward, corresponding to the aspirations of the revolutionary classes and their allies, to the collective effort to advance towards the political objective, the revolution, the rupture with the neocolonial system, is formulated as follows: “peoples of the Ivory Coast, let us commit ourselves firmly to the struggle for a sovereign, democratic and prosperous Ivory Coast.”

This tactical political slogan involves three major themes of agitation and struggle: (1) the defense and conquest of sovereignty with as major actions of agitation and propaganda for the withdrawal of the foreign armies and prohibition of their establishment on the national soil, the withdrawal from the FCFA (West African Franc); (2) the defense of freedoms and the pursuit of justice with such major actions as the defense of the trade union and political freedoms, the struggle for the release of political prisoners, the establishment of a new constitution and a new electoral commission ; (3) the defense and the conquest of the rights of the workers with major actions such as the defense of the demands of the workers.

Practical fights around these three themes must be carried out mainly by the effort of the party and by the organization of the revolutionary classes. This fight will also be carried out if possible with agreements for struggles with all opposition parties and associations of any kind that are interested in these struggles.

Abidjan, March 30, 2018
Central Committee of the PCRCI

Mexico

Communist Party of Mexico (Marxist-Leninist)

Mexico: The Working Class and Peoples Face New Challenges

The year 2018 is one of fundamental changes in the political forces of the country, linked to changes in the structure of the social classes and new arenas of class struggle. The bourgeois elections within the capitalist-imperialist system are fundamentally an arena of disputes within the bourgeoisie to decide which faction of the bourgeoisie or the oligarchy will direct the destinies of a country in the following period. They are also the causes and consequences of the restructuring of social classes; they are presented as a political conjuncture, which shows the level of development of the contradictions between the social classes. As this situation develops, it affects the course of the class struggle, the motive force of history.

The elections to be held in Mexico this year express a series of contradictions within the ruling class in the country; so far (March 2018) they point to a change in the sector of the oligarchy that will possibly lead the national destiny in the next 6 years; they are setting new scenarios in which we the working class and peoples of Mexico must develop in the next period. Therefore, from now on, to the extent of our ability, we will be acting in the midst of the current situation and preparing ourselves for the new challenges.

The electoral process and the contradictions within the bourgeoisie

In the previous issue of Unity and Struggle, we exposed the particularities of the elections that are developing in our country; advanced the process, today we are sketching out the course of this situation. We will also refer to the possible scenarios that we have been elaborating for more than three years, and how today these scenarios are expressed.

The elections will be held on July 1 to choose the main representatives of the federal government (President of the Republic, Chamber of Senators, Chamber of Deputies), of several States and Municipalities, who will hold office for 6 years or 3 years depend-

ing on their position; in general they will be the governing force for at least the next 6 years.

On April 1, the electoral campaigns officially begin; basically there are two factions of the Mexican bourgeoisie that are fighting for the leadership of the country: on the one hand there is the pro-fascist ultra-right, represented by two partisan coalitions in the country, one headed for the current party in power, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) whose candidate is Jose Antonio Meade Kuribreña, and the other, led by the National Action Party that governed Mexico between 2000 and 2012, and is nominating Ricardo Anaya Cortés. Although this faction has two candidates from two coalitions, in reality it is a single faction, which has governed the country for several decades. Among the political parties and candidates in this faction, there are the main executives of State policies dictated by imperialism and its international agencies located, and they have acted for the benefit mainly of transnational corporations in the process of accumulation of capital. Eleven structural reforms consolidated during the last governmental period have been the crown jewel of these parties and therefore they are seen as the favorites of the White House to govern Mexico.

The pro-fascist ultra-right in the country has as the central points of its government program to continue the subjection of the Mexican economy to the designs of U.S. imperialism, through the privatization of all areas of the Mexican economy to benefit the U.S. monopolies. To the working class, they propose to eliminate all the historical gains established in labor laws. As if that were not enough, to combat the social unrest caused by the application of these policies, this trend has begun to deepen the fascistization in the country, legalizing the intervention of the Mexican army in the tasks of internal security, through a fascist law called the Law of Internal Security, approved in the Congress of the Union last December. This was reinforced by a law that restricts freedom of expression in the country, popularly known as the Gag Law.

These pro-fascist political forces, with all their anti-worker and anti-popular policies, have been repudiated by the popular masses, besides being in full decay and decomposition, whose veins are infected by corruption and drug trafficking. Many of their members are abandoning these parties in mass, before they sink. They have no chance of winning the popular vote in these elections; but they do have all the instruments and institutional control to impose them-

selves by a great electoral fraud that is not ruled out under current conditions.

Not very different from the former, there is the other bourgeois section, which considers itself the nationalist sector of the bourgeoisie that has contradictions with the pro-imperialist sector over the distribution of the wealth produced in the country. But they do not differ on the need to accelerate the process of accumulation of capital through greater exploitation of the working class and the natural resources of the country, both subscribe to the neoliberal model. This bourgeois sector today presents itself in the elections with the coalition of parties led by the National Regeneration Movement (MORENA), which has nominated Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) for the presidency of the republic.

MORENA was founded in 2012, originally of political groups that split from the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), after the latter's surrender to the PRI and the PAN, supposedly to reconstruct a "left" bourgeois option in the Mexican political spectrum. This party was founded by Lopez Obrador, who, in order to seduce the popular masses, was following an opposition discourse, labeling the PRI-PAN-PRD as "the mafia in power" and calling for the defeat of the oligarchy, as the benefactor of the political model. Until two years ago, it maintained a radical discourse within the framework of a bourgeois opposition and the parameters of the contradictions within the bourgeoisie; it sought to assume a social-democratic and reformist position.



As the elections of 2018 are approaching, MORENA's social democratic and reformist façade is vanishing and the bourgeois essence of Lopez Obrador and his "Project of the Nation" is being exposed, not only because of the abandonment of the aggressive discourse against "the mafia in power", but in the formation of its proposed cabinet, in which there are people linked to the economic and monopoly groups of the country. In the nomination of the candidates of MORENA to the various positions up for popular election, headed by cadres who had recently been members of the PRI, PAN and PRD, displacing left and right the activists, trade union and social leaders who believed that MORENA was different from the other bourgeois parties.

AMLO and MORENA at the present moment enjoy a good deal of popular support, particularly because the masses want a change and find it in the anti-corruption discourse against the "mafia in power" and the nationalist discourse that he has promoted for a long time. In the final stretch, as is said in public and private that the oligarchy is in favor of the "political stability" of the country, which would allow it to maintain or accelerate the process of capital accumulation for the benefit of the bourgeoisie and the financial oligarchy, AMLO has closed ranks with the most important sectors of the ruling classes of the country. Also, taking advantage of the inter-imperialist contradictions and the U.S. monopolies, it can be seen that it has the backing of the international financial oligarchy, which is mainly opposed to Donald Trump.

In these conditions AMLO has all the conditions to become the next President of the Republic. However, because of his veneration of bourgeois institutions and legality, because of his contempt for the force of the masses, and for giving advantage to the incorporation of sectors of the oligarchy and its cronies, the representatives of the right and ultra-right in his government team, he is opening the way to an electoral fraud in favor of the PRI-PAN. In order to ingratiate himself with the exploiting classes, AMLO has also called for peaceful elections without street demonstrations, which neutralizes and eliminates the willingness of the masses to push for a transition backed by the popular force in the streets. .

Other bourgeois forces, such as some independent candidates, will also take part in the current elections; however, they do not constitute a determining factor. On the contrary, they are at the ser-

vice of the final scenario chosen by the financial oligarchy to administer the general interests of the capitalist-imperialist system.

The working class and popular movement in the struggle for their class independence

Before the current political situation, we, the working class and peoples of Mexico, carried out a tenacious struggle against the reactionary offensive manifested by the imposition of the structural reforms. Already in previous articles, we pointed out that from 2012 to date, the teachers' struggle, the struggle for the appearance alive of the disappeared, of the agricultural workers, of the university workers, of the doctors and nurses have stood out in Mexico. Added to this are the hundreds of situations of conflict scattered throughout the country, including the current struggle waged by the working class in the mining, electrical and telecommunications sector. They are part of the whole spectrum of the class struggle of the proletariat and peoples of Mexico.

The apparatuses of bourgeois control over the working class are still predominant; the workers' federations such as the Confederation of Workers of Mexico (CTM) predominate among the organized working class; the sectors that have opposed this control have not managed to independently construct a single pole of attraction. Among the latter forces are the National Union of Workers (UNT), headed by the Union of Telephone Workers of the Mexican Republic (STRM), the New Workers' Federation (NCT) headed by the Mexican Union of Electricians; the National Union of Miners, Steel Workers and Similar Workers of the Mexican Republic (SNTMMSRM). The National Coordinator of Education Workers (CNTE), as an important force among the national teachers, is also part of this bloc.

The peasant and popular movement has a broader composition within the independent field that is not under the control of the Mexican state (the National Peasant Confederation (CNC) and the Peasant Torch are organizations that participate in the PRI); there are many peasant organizations outside of these PRI organizations, however, the majority of the peasant movement is social-democratic and economist. The urban popular movement is more disunited, and although the organizations of the bourgeoisie do not have a strong control, the independence of the inhabitants of the country's metropolises is also not expressed in strong popular organizations.

The fact that an important bloc of the working class is not under the control of the CTM or the Congress of Labor does not automatically mean that they are for the emancipation of the working class; but it is an important step, at least in the organizational aspect: trade unions and union federations outside the control of the State. At least in the last two decades, efforts have been made to build both an independent workers' federation and a process of unity with the peasant, indigenous and popular movement. These efforts are what have allowed the revolutionary organizations to merge with the proletariat, thus constituting a fertile field to fight for the class independence of the workers' and popular movement.

This process of building the United Front today rests on several organizations: the Popular National Assembly, led by the Parents of the 43 [refers to the 43 disappeared student teachers of Ayotzinapa – *translator's note*]; the National Assembly of Organizations of the Workers of the City and Countryside, the Broad Social Unitary Front, headed by the UNT; and the National Assembly for the Unity of the Mexican People and the National Assembly of Union, Peasant and Civil Society Leaders into which come together almost all the other organizations of popular class struggle except the tendency around the National Indigenous Congress, Indigenous Council of Government and the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, which has maintained its own orientation in the struggle against neoliberalism. These forces have been able to link and unite the main organizations of unity of the workers, now even including the social democratic and reformist faction of the financial oligarchy that is trying to capitalize on it. However, many workers', peasants' and popular struggles are still not united throughout the Mexican territory. The formation of a single action plan for the whole country is one of the main victories that the process of the United Front has achieved this year, and this is the main thing that distinguishes it from the earlier periods. Other points such as the quality of the forms of struggle (towards the General Political Strike) and the levels of organization (National Assembly of the Proletariat and Peoples of Mexico) still remain on the table for discussion of these unitary processes.

Under these conditions, the Mexican proletariat has to face the political situation marked by the current electoral process; the main discussion during this period has been marked by how the Mexican workers and people should intervene in the midst of the elections, how to take advantage of the situation to put their own interests at

the center; three tendencies have opened up within the mass movement over this point.

One tendency has been from the initiative of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) and the National Indigenous Congress, which has kept its distance from the unitary processes and specific struggles of the country, which launched the proposal for an independent candidacy, headed by Maria de Jesus Patricio "Marichuy". This has sparked a hope among many sectors, considering that an independent candidacy of an anti-capitalist character in the electoral situation could express the proletarian-popular interests more clearly in this process. The isolation and a certain sectarianism with which this proposal was put forth led to its being abandoned during the pre-campaign period, since it failed to gather the necessary signatures to appear on the ballot. Of the forces of the movement, in addition to those that built the initiative, which supported the proposal, the members of the New Federation of Workers stood out.

At the other extreme is the tendency of those who proposed full support for AMLO. They justified it by claiming that, to change the country means to defeat the PRI and PAN, even though neither AMLO nor MORENA propose to include the minimum demands of the workers' and popular movement in its government program proposed for the next period. The Miners' Union and the majority of the peasant sector of the National Assembly of Leaders are the ones that openly took this position. Among the rest of the unitary forces, unions and organizations, there are also those that are pulling in this direction.

Finally, including forces from both blocs, was the tendency that put in the center the class independence of the movement, the importance of a minimum program, the preservation of the process of accumulation of forces reached up to the moment. Under the principle of preserving unity as the apple of one's eye, the discussion was begun, recognizing the many components of the movement from various unitary positions, we managed to establish a minimum program, a single plan of action that contemplates central days of struggle on specific dates: January 31, April 10, May 1 and July 1 (election day) coinciding with the struggle for the defense of the popular will (understood as the immediate and historic aspirations of the working class and the popular masses). As well as being part of delivering a defeat to the PRI, PAN and its allies, from class po-

sitions we agree that this is the position that helps the working class to maintain its class independence; to be an active participant in the current political situation and to preserve in the best way its accumulated forces to face the next period of the class struggle.

The new challenges

The elections of July 1 will mark the beginning of a new period of the class struggle in Mexico; and if the forecast that AMLO will be the next president of the country is correct, to suit the general interests of the bourgeoisie and imperialism, because the masses are already fed up with the governments of the PRI, PAN and PRD; the working class and the mass movement, will enter into a tough debate, even when it is the development of the government program itself that clarifies the points of view; but an important sector will be neutralized and immobilized.

The most consistent sectors of the working class and the popular movement will have the main challenge of maintaining the level of unity and mobilization achieved in the last eight years, which will be difficult in the first two years of the next government, since it will come with a very high level of social acceptance.

For the Mexican communists, it is clear that the meaning of the class struggle will not have a drastic variation; but it will place us in a new scenario in which we must continue raising the banner of proletarian revolution and socialism.

April, 2018



Morocco

Democratic Way El Titi el Habib

The Forms and Content of the Militancy of the Masses, the Class and Their Links

With the movement of February 20, the militancy of the masses has seen a transformation in our country; this demands a new analysis, an advance, the renewal of analytical tools and approach.

The persistence in the same approach no longer allows us to understand the variables or to infer the methods for militancy and change. This is attributed to the growing emergence of new forms of protest based on marches, uprisings and sit-ins led by different social movements, whose composition varies by class, category and professional level. The classic forms are seeing a relative decline, such as strikes, picket lines led by trade unions, parties or professional associations.

So, this is a new stage in our country. How should we act? But before answering, we must ask ourselves whether the case of our country is isolated or is it a common phenomenon; how does it happen and what are its causes? How did it end up spreading to us in this period and under these circumstances?

These social movements are not particular to our country nor are they the product of the moment. For this reason we find ourselves before writers and theorists who specialize in these social movements. It would be enlightening to see this diverse multitude of intellectual products and to study them, as this would be of practical benefit to the protest movements that are leading and will lead these social movements.

To contribute to the debate that is current today, we believe we must start from some popular notions that occupy a great place among theorists and activists of the social movements: spontaneity, the negation of social classes, the negation of ideology and apoliticism.

Time and place do not allow us to explain all the stages of the social movements, and so we will focus on present reality. What characterizes the new configuration of these movements lies in the fact that they mix both the social movements that have been rear-

ranged and handled by political or trade union forces with social movements that are not the result of a preliminary work but that have suddenly emerged to the point that some consider them spontaneous. In the current state we consider that this last type of social movement is by far the most active and dominant.

To explain this situation we will dwell on two main causes: one is the fact that the organized forces, parties and unions are experiencing a strong ebb, an unprecedented decline or even extinction of some components or their integration into the dominant political system by providing support to the rulers and to authority. The second cause lies in the decline of progressive thinking, and fundamentally communist thinking that opposes imperialism and supports the liberation of the peoples, even if today it is being reborn from its ashes. However, the impact of the temporary defeat and the collapse of the socialist experience have had their effect on the progressive forces, which has allowed the retrograde and isolated currents of identity politics to occupy the terrain, aided by the imperialist institutions and by the reactionary states in the region. This reality has had repercussions on the political action of these forces and the decline of their influence, without managing to structure the social movements. Some of them hope to catch up and succeed in renewing their structures as political parties and trade unions by recovering these social movements, giving credibility to their accusers who reproach them for using these movements.

For this reason, the rise of these social movements takes place abruptly and they are transformed into protest movements that take on several forms of struggle and organization with extensive or moderate demands, without having a centralized command. And in order to limit this area, it would be useful to address the main features of the popular protests that have taken place after the decline of the February 20 movement since 2013.

The first point or element to be aware of is that the socio-economic and political conditions have deteriorated considerably; the regime is now unable to meet the growing demands of the masses. This means that prospects for the future are almost absent and that the manifestations of the crisis, in the first place the lack of work and its precariousness, create a feeling of frustration and marginalization among all categories of young people. Unemployment has become a scourge for the majority of families, regardless of their social background, affecting equally young people from the

middle bourgeoisie and the working classes. Besides this problem we find poverty and the collapse of the purchasing power among all the popular classes – due to the high cost of essential consumer goods and services caused by the delegated administration – and because of the lack of social services such as health care and education that have plagued the people with costs and expenses, the result of the state's withdrawal from public services, thus renouncing its duties and commitments by delegating them to the private sector.

From this basis and these conditions protests began and the citizens went out to express their discontent and their rejection of poverty and misery. What is important for us is to dwell on this aspect to distinguish between these protest movements and to note the following: it is almost impossible to analyze all these movements because they are so numerous. Even the services of the Interior Ministry put forward figures estimated at tens of thousands of sit-ins and other forms of protest; they do this in order to convey a political discourse on freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and protest in order to justify the suppression of these movements. Besides this quantitative aspect we can distinguish two essential types of protest movements:

The first of these movements is the one that is set off by a specific cause and during which the masses have expressed a specific demand and have either been repressed or they have received promises and things have come to an end until the next time. This may be a protest movement in a popular neighborhood or an neglected social category or a movement in a specific town or region as in the case of Zagora, etc.

The second are those protest movements that have managed to become social movements. They may concern only one village, one city, one region or an extended area. But what are the factors that transform the protest movement into a real social movement? This question would make use of the peoples' experiences and not waste energy on rediscovering the laws and social relations in order to make gains and make a reasonable contribution to these same gains. Then how can we contribute to transforming these protest movements into social movements, what are the functional elements required for this; here it is the task of the organizational factor regardless of its form, its reference and its origin.

• A clarification concerning social movements: The scientific history of social movements is not formed apart from the conflicts

that develop in human societies and cannot be isolated from them; as long as these movements in their origin mean the conflict between individuals and groups about their values and interests; the conflict is seen as one of the dimensions of the social movements in its protest form, which is based on rejection and on the aspiration for change.

Bloomer points out that a social movement is a collective effort to change the nature of stable social relationships in a given society. In his opinion social movements are social projects aimed at establishing a new system of life; they are based on a feeling of discontent with the prevailing conditions, and the desire to put in place a new system "and the condition for the foundation of each social movement is constantly linked to continuous change." The change in time affects in a long-term manner the structure and process of the social system in order to know what modifies or transforms the course of its history, the social movement only acquires legitimacy if it makes change a condition of its existence, at the risk of losing its meaning.

In addition to the desire for change, there is another element in the definition of the social movement which is no less important than the preceding one; this is precisely its continuity. The sociology dictionary of Golden's blog states that these are continuing efforts of a social group that aim to achieve goals common to all of its members. Continuous action is the one that ensures the ability of the practice of protest to belong conceptually to the social movement as a long-term organized effort, where one reality is eliminated and another is constructed. This is why François Charles asserts that the social movement is the equivalent of "a collective action of protest in order to impose changes in the social and political environment." Thus it is a question of organized efforts by people in order to change or oppose change in society."

The social movement presupposes a certain degree of organization in order to reach the goal of change and overcoming, Roscher insists. He states that "it is a structured and defined organization, with the declared goal of grouping individuals together to defend their specific concerns." This leads once again to the recognition of the importance of the founding and developing element of the social movement; every movement works for a specific cause, and carries out protests to realize it. That is why we can conclude that the social movement cannot acquire its form and its content without a mini-

imum of organization, clarity of its objectives and the condition of the previous existence of a group based on values and norms that achieve a certain degree of unanimity.

The formation of a social movement raises many differences, according to the multiplicity of its approaches, the theoretical and methodological foundations but the differences does not seem radical concerning its potential particularities, in spite of all the debate which centers around the outline of a uniform and clear concept of the social movement. The majority of formations emphasize that the subject is linked to a collective effort of individuals with specific goals that aspire to achieve it with a collective approach; this is also linked to the presence of socially accepted norms that could achieve unanimity in the form of encouragement, unconditional support or relative sympathy.

The majority of social movements are characterized by the conscious desire of its members to consider that change presupposes a degree of consciousness of the needs and demands in addition to a minimum of organization as the specific characteristic of social movements. The difficulties posed by this definition show the extent of the debate around social movements in the second half of the 20th century, to the degree that the attention of interdisciplinary researchers has been directed towards the analysis of individuals and groups that come out to protest and demand change in demonstrations, uprisings and rebellions.

Any social movement requires a minimum of organization with all that this entails as mechanisms: the rules of behavior, manage-



ment and expression, which are essential principles for the infrastructure of protest action. As one could not conceive of a social movement without unifying discourse that guides the idea of the protest, this discourse expresses a superstructure of the social movements whereas one could consider it as a pivotal question in the study of these movements to the degree that it refers to its constructs and the supposed significance.

The presentation of a critical study of movements under the title "sociology of social movements" by Professor François Dubet was prepared by the student Mahmud Safi Mahmud.

And so that our presentation does not turn into a study on the sociology of social movements, we will content ourselves with pointing out that sociology classifies these social movements into four groups:

1. The theory of group behavior
2. The theory of mobilization of resources
3. The theory of the new social movement
4. The paradigm of action / identity

Referring to these functional elements that risk considering each movement as a social movement, we prefer the conclusions of Charles Tilly in his historical study. Charles Tilly is considered one of the most important scholars in the field of social movements and he considers three elements in his book "Social Movements 1768-2004" translated by Rabii Wahba.

1. The campaign: a general, continuous and organized effort that imposes collective demands on the authorities

2. Ammunition of the social movement (repertoire of the social movement): in the form of instrumentalization of possible combinations of the following political forms and activities: formation of associations that have specific aims, specific meetings, spectacular parades, strike pickets, marches, demonstrations, campaigns, press releases, political brochures and publications)

3. Calls for sit-ins: representation of all the unifying qualities of the participants, which are: meritocracy, unity, numerical dynamics, commitment to support each other and / or their popular base (see Charles Tilly)

We mention these functional elements as translated by Rabii Wahba since it was necessary to adapt them to our concepts and our political discourse in Morocco, in particular within the left. That is why we understand the element of the campaign as the effort pro-

vided by activists in order to make known the conditions and formulate a program of demands, and to establish a priority of demands. The second element is the one that relates to all the organizational forms that the protest movement will follow, starting with the creation of self-organization up to the fighting methods of the movement such as marches and demonstrations, etc. The last element is the one which concerns the strengthening and consolidation of the movement and the creation of mechanisms likely to guarantee the unity of the movement and its continuity.

In trying to verify the existence of these elements in the current movements in Morocco, especially in the Rif and at Jerada, we find an identity that goes as far as identification as if the leaders of these movements literally applied what we had mentioned, including the taking of oaths by the leaders of the Jerada movement and their rank and file. This is why we should read this detail apart from the accusations that some claim are a shift towards obscurantism and Daeshism (relating to Daesh: the group of the Islamic State). This reading is far from grasping the true meaning of things. This does not understand the need because it accomplishes this from a position committed to the unity of the movement, to the real problems posed. If the detractors are able to assimilate these needs, they will be able to understand and help the activists find better solutions.

Assessments and evaluations:

1. First assessment:

The left does not pay enough attentions to its duties in order to transform the popular protests into protest movements. But it adopts an erroneous view of these protest movements to the point of not attaching importance to these elements of the social movement, including the preliminary preparation concerning the list of demands and the realization of the quantitative dynamics, the strengthening and consolidation of the movement. The cause of its lack of interest towards these questions is due to the conception of the members instead of the masses who are no longer affected by the spectacle of a sit-in or a march with only dozens of people.

2. Second assessment:

Some protest movements have been able to transform themselves into social movements in the scientific sense of the term,

while others have not achieved this; for example, when Mother Fatiha set herself on fire in Kenitra or when 15 women died in Boualam near Essaouira. When these protest movements are transformed into social movements, we find that the popular masses were organized to a certain extent by what we can call organic intellectuals, and who are themselves members of the organization of the left. While in other places this aspect was absent and underdevelopment reigned supreme with a demand based on the logic of almsgiving and benevolence and the Makhzen [governing institution centered around the king and nobles – *translator's note*] was active through its instruments and zawiyas [Islamic religious school – *translator's note*].

3. The social movements have today become a structural reality; they are increasing, becoming the main form of waging the class struggle to the point in which some people believe that it is the era in which middle bourgeoisie is leading the revolution or the change and that is why they propose the theory of new social movements advanced by Alain Touraine and others. On the other hand, some people think that the question of social movements has gone beyond social class and that the organization has a partisan character. These conclusions do not lack realistic arguments and documents and partisan arrogance which continue to regurgitate obsolete concepts or outmoded forms of organization or outdated discourses. In this sense it is necessary for Marxists to evaluate and rehabilitate themselves, starting with the criticism of weapons to ensure renewal and evolution with courage, firmness and responsibility.

Evaluation I: sharpen the weapon of organization

In regard to the Moroccan experience, this was not the first time that the situation imposed the criticism of weapons. This need has been present since the 1960s and a group of militants resorted to a criticism of weapons, the weapon of organization that led to the birth of Moroccan Marxist-Leninist movement (summarized in the document entitled "the masks have fallen off; let us open the path of revolution") and also by building a new organization that meets the needs of this period and makes its contributions to the class struggle in our country. The results were positive as evidenced by the consciousness and evolution of the people as well as all that has been achieved in our country, especially the ongoing operation of selection and the growing isolation of the regime as a coalition of the

ruling classes, and the militant dynamism of the protest movements. All of this has been fertile ground and we are witnessing these changes. Now, it is imperative to carry out a criticism of the weapon of organization with the necessary courage and dedication. The main criticism to which we have been subjected is the one reproaching us for being political talking shops; the repercussion of this criticism is the reluctance of young people to massively and voluntarily join our ranks.

This is a harsh criticism and an underestimation of our efforts; the lack of commitment of young people in our ranks is due to a lack of gratitude and lack of recognition by some people whom we have provided training. All this and even more has been foreseen by the criticism, but our attitude must be to accept the criticism and the hurtful remarks because we are revolutionaries by principle and as long as we act there will be some errors in our work and our conceptions. We believe that this is the surest way to deal with with this criticism, instead of the simpler way of opening a front against all those who have been referred as political talking shops to carry out a purge or offensive against the propagators of the designation "talking shops," against the followers of anarchy and supporters of spontaneity. Contrary to this, it was necessary to listen to the criticism, analyze its motivations and seek in our thought and practice all that relates to that.

In this way, I consider that the criticism addressed to the left has a lot of truth, which gives credibility to this criticism addressed to us. It would have been impossible to reject it as a whole, absolutely and categorically. Whoever among us acts in this way will close the road to development; they may quickly turn into a political talking shop and become an outcast among the masses. Do we agree to conform to fashion and flatter popular sentiments without the risk of facing them? This in turn represents a risk that must be avoided because its opportunist nature is likely to be discovered and the organization may become a bankrupt political talking shop which loses the trust of its members and of the popular masses as well. To avoid these risks, it is necessary to dwell on the flaws that make us seen by the masses and their leaders as political talking shops with no difference from the others, while we are trying to provide an explanation and solutions to this situation in order to overcome it. With the success of this operation, the criticism of the weapon of organization will have contributed to helping us build an organiza-

tion a new type. This is why I consider this operation as a collective mission because it would encourage every member, whatever the area of his militant activities, to examine his practice and his personal convictions.

In practice, we will have to make our views better known among the members regarding the four processes and their dialectical interrelations: the process of the building of an independent party of the working class and of all the working masses, the process of building a national front of the popular classes, the process of developing Marxist internationalism. The common thread among these processes is that we are building a revolution party that considers that the people under the leadership of the working class are the ones who take up the change and not the ones who would replace the working class in this historic mission. The line of this party is that of the masses, teaching them and learning from them at the same time, that the vanguard is the vanguard of the masses. A Party that understands and applies Lenin's directive in speaking of the relationship between the party and popular spontaneity by stating: "The fact that the masses are spontaneously being drawn into the movement does not make the organization of this struggle less necessary. On the contrary, it makes it more necessary." [*What Is To Be Done?*, Chapter IV, Section B.]

When the members recognize this truth they will be able to merge with the popular struggles and they will not turn their backs on them. They will also help to build the independent organizations of the masses in the popular neighborhoods and on the picket lines. They will be side by side with the young leaders who will emerge, providing them with support and ensuring that the left militants are with them and are not political talking shops like those who try to make use of and divert their struggles. They will be able to deal with all the poisoned proposals that try to isolate them from the masses or to undermine them. Wherever the masses are, there is a place for sincere militants.

Evaluation II: about the strategic role of the party of the working class

Despite the crucial importance of the social movements, as we have said, they need structure to ensure that the functional elements that can transform protest movements into social movements and to protect themselves are realized. The elements likely to achieve this

must have a minimum of training, education and skill, qualities that can only be acquired within the party or in contact with one of its branches. Attention must be paid to the fact that the social movements, left to their own dynamism, can succumb to isolationism, dispersion or decomposition because of the violence of the confrontation with the various repressive organs and the politics and ideology of the State. In order to resolve these problems through the establishment of networks of social movements, increasing their pace and mobilizing national and international forces, the intervention of a militant and firm party is necessary.

The dialectical relationship between the social movements and the party is being clarified. And through this relationship the rectification is being carried out of the dominant discourse today, which glorifies spontaneity, apoliticism and the denial of the truth of the struggle of the social classes. It is by linking a healthy and dialectical relationship with these movements that the party can play its role as a general staff that organizes the war of the class struggle. As long as the party is rooted in the ranks of the working and laboring class, it can restore to trade union work its militant worker content, freeing it from the bourgeoisie and its accomplices. This will lead to reinforcing the protest movements in the popular neighborhoods, in the small or large towns and in the countryside; it will enable these protest movements to be transformed into massive social movements that have the elements of the program of demands, self-organization and mechanisms for ordering the struggles and strengthening popular unity. Through these movements the fronts are formed on the terrain with the different militant forces, according to the list of demands as well as the formation of the nuclei of the front of the classes that aspire to radical change.

Peru

Peruvian Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist)

Without a Communist Party and an Organized People, There Is No Revolution

In the periods when there are high points in the class struggle, political demonstrations of all kinds generally arise; on the one hand deviations from the left that seek an “accelerated change” or a quick solution without having a solid program or an organization that can take up the leadership of the popular movement; or a deviation from the right that awaits a bourgeois solution to the crisis and assumes the position of spectator of the process of change.

Faced with these deviations, the PCP (M-L) points out its position vis-à-vis the current panorama and defines the tasks that its membership must carry out in order to channel popular indignation and be the reference point of the social struggle for the transformation of the country.

The events that have taken place since December 2017

The pardon for the genocidal, robber and corrupt Alberto Fujimori, the declaration of the places where the popular protests are taking place as emergency zones, the determination of the amounts of dollars given as bribes from ODEBRECHT to Peruvian politicians, the negotiations to avoid the presidential vacancy, the laws that Congress has enacted to criminalize popular protest, the approval of the Juvenile Slavery Bill, the exemption from the payment of taxes to the big transnational corporations, the law that prevents audits of Parliament for its expenses and contracts, the authorization of the entry of U.S. troops, etc., have shown the Peruvian people more clearly how the country has been led. The CONFIEP¹ is the body that represents the interests of the intermediary bourgeoisie and the transnationals; they are the true holders of the political power of the State and the various rulers and parliamentarians have been no more than their puppets. This is also true of the Police, Army, Navy and Air Force, who are also defenders of their neoliberal con-

¹ Association of the biggest business owners and their Peruvian figureheads

stitutional order; they are not, as they say, defenders of national sovereignty and the interests of the Peruvian people.

“Bourgeois representative democracy” has been shown to be a farce by which the working people are deceived and kept under wage slavery. They claim: “the people elect their rulers,” “the people are the rulers and the presidents and congressional representatives interpret their highest aspirations.” We have always said. This is false, and now the people are more conscious of this since it is the CONFIEP which, by different means that money permits, ensures the election of its candidate, taking into account the various situations that the country is going through. It has at its disposition “radicals” such as Ollanta Humala who later was tamed to ensure the continuous flow of foreign investments, or the purer representatives of the neoliberal model such as the corrupt former president Pedro Pablo Kuczynski. At one time the Peruvian State represented the interests of the feudal aristocracy and now it represents the interests of the intermediary bourgeoisie, the figureheads of imperialism and not of any other class. It is not a “State of all the Peruvians”; it is the State of the bourgeoisie that exercises its organized violence against the working class.

The bourgeoisie maintains its system in force with the buying and selling of votes in Congress to change sides of the parliamentarians and in the general elections it buys the voters in the poorest areas with money or “sealed envelopes,” as is the custom of Fujimorist drug-trafficking politicians. They also ensure the election of their candidates with the use of television mercenaries who divert the attention of the people, such as: Jaime Bayli, Aldo Mariategui, Jaime de Althaus, among other hack writers who serve as journalists, but whose mission is to guide the people’s intention to vote and divert their attention from their true interests. This is played out in each electoral contest and each legislative period. In this framework, the people choose among the most propagandized options imposed by their national and foreign henchmen.

Important expressions of popular opposition have been noted

There have been demonstrations against the pardon, with the demand that **all the corrupt and exploiters must go!**, against the generalized corruption, against the Law of youth exploitation N ° 1215. Along with these important forms of popular struggle there have also been the still low levels of indignation of a large sector of

the population that, lulled by television propaganda, sees no alternative but to maintain the current system and resign itself to living in the same way.

The most advanced sector of the popular movement is fighting against corruption, capitalist exploitation, abuse and imperialist plunder, but they are not yet fighting for a solid program, a real solution to capitalist barbarism, and this is because we have not yet managed to defeat bourgeois propaganda and spread the proletarian program: to fight for People's Democracy and Socialism in order to put an end to exploitation, pollution, looting, unemployment, corruption, among other evils from which the working people suffer. This is our task, which should be carried out urgently in order to develop the popular and revolutionary solution to the continual crises through which the country has been going. The constitutional solution that the bourgeoisie has achieved, after the resignation of Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, does not in the least ensure the winning of better material and cultural conditions for the working class.

Without an organized Communist Party there is no Revolution

The Communist Party is the most important subjective factor of the working class in its tasks of organizing and carrying out the revolution for national and social liberation, it is its highest organized expression of our class, its conscious and fighting vanguard. In its ranks are found the best sons and daughters of the working people who honestly, consistently and selflessly strive to realize the historic tasks of the working class. Based on their own efforts and resources, they seek to do away with the bourgeois dictatorship and build Socialism. They are the men and women who faithfully take up the organizational, political and ideological principles of the working class, Marxism-Leninism, the Program and the Statute of the Party. This voluntary adherence completes the process of training in the class struggle of thousands of social fighters who have been able to see further and more clearly than the rest of the people, who still have not been able to shake off the prejudices that the bourgeoisie has inculcated in their minds or who have difficulty taking up proletarian discipline, necessary for a historic party. Thus we state that **there are no Marxist-Leninist communists outside the PCP (M-L)**. Outside the party there are social fighters, rebels, intellectuals who have read Marxist and Leninist books, people who fight in a consistent and disinterested way; but they have not been

able to see beyond the limits established by the capitalist system; because they cannot, do not want to or because we have not managed to attract them to the cause of the working class and our ranks for true social change.



Sign reads: Real punishment for corruption

Of the communist cadres who survived the massacre of Fujimori-Montesino and Shining Path, there are many who joyfully take our central organ *Bandera Roja* [Red Flag], who are carrying out association, trade union and electoral work but who are not organized in cells of study and work. They should be considered as friends, not members, since **the communists are organized into cells of study and work**, they fulfill specific tasks of organization, leadership, agitation and propaganda and give vitality to the functioning of the party, by developing within and disseminating outside the party's policy in the living sectors of the social struggle. Anyone who claims to be a cadre formed at some point within the ranks of the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party and is not organized in a cell, in practice shies away from party discipline and cannot be considered as a member. The communists have in the cell the natural place of organization from which they exercise collective leadership and individual responsibility, criticism and self-criticism, from where they participate in democratic centralism and from where they assimilate and disseminate Marxist-Leninist theory. This does not fall from the sky nor is it learned by rote; it must be studied, verified and refined in social practice.

The working people have sectors where the critical consciousness has had an important development, that take up the leadership of the social movement, but that still have not managed to lead the popular indignation towards the revolutionary and socialist torrents. We cannot accuse them all of being renegades to Socialism; for not every arena of social struggle is under the control of the local revisionism of “Patria Roja” [Red Fatherland] or “Unity”. However, we can say that they lack clarity about the tasks of the Revolution and the building of Socialism, that this honest sector is the one which we must urgently reach with our revolutionary press and provide them with a solid program to fight for. *Bandera Roja* is not a newspaper for sale to the general public; it is a collective organizer of the popular movement to bring them closer to the position of the working class represented by its Communist Party; it is the organ of our policy and its role will be achieved to the extent that it reaches the hands and understanding of those social fighters who are for change and whose actions we communists should provide more content.

The task of organizing the Communist Party in the decisive sectors of political, trade union and popular activity is placed on the order of the day so that there is a body that leads the actions of opposition and indignation with a greater perspective and guides them towards the positions of the working class, towards the tasks of building a People’s Democratic and Socialist Republic in Peru.

Without an organized people there is no revolution

The organized people are the protagonists who make history and who carry forward the tasks of the national liberation revolution and the struggle for Socialism when they are led by the Party of the working class. We cannot expect a spontaneous reaction of generalized indignation from them, as preached by the petty bourgeoisie and anarchism; nor can we pretend to replace them in their historical tasks. We must prepare them so that their indignation and opposition have the support of a revolutionary program, Socialism. We must learn from them but fundamentally we must educate them based on their own experience of struggle, we must constantly act among them knowing their state of mind and carrying out revolutionary pedagogy, clarifying the political scene. We must provide them with all the organizational instruments so that they can fulfill their mission as the historical protagonists, provide them with a skilled leadership and a union-association structure, councilor or

popular front so that they function better. We must strive to organize the majority of the popular sectors from the artists, progressive intellectuals, street vendors and small merchants, students, peasants, workers and the whole social sector from which we can stimulate resistance and channel the indignation and popular orientation towards socialist causes **faced with the crises that we are going through.**

Conclusion and general orientation

There are no communists outside the Communist Party, there are no communist members without organization in a cell, without organization in cells there is no organized Communist Party that can lead the struggle of the working class and the working people to change the social structures rotted away by capitalist exploitation and corruption.

It is time for us accelerate the pace and apply in a more dynamic manner the Resolutions and Conclusions of the VII National Conference and the Party Program and provide a skilled leadership to the social struggle in Peru.

With the Party and the organized People, everything!

Without the Party and the organized People nothing!

**Let us develop the subjective conditions that
ensure the popular solution!**

**Let us advance in the organizaional strengthening
of the Communist Party!**

**Let us continue with greater effort the task of organizing
the working people and popular sectors!**

CC of the PCP (M-L)

March 2018

Spain

Communist Party of Spain (M-L) – PCE(ML)

Santiago Baranga

The Pedagogical Ideas of Marx*

* Article prepared by the group *Theory and Praxis* for the PCE (M-L)

For a long time in the field of educational struggles in Spain, there has been a lack of a global critique of the entire educational system that could serve as a starting point to building alternatives of a systemic nature. Those sectors that have been fighting in a solid manner for decades, the capitalist school has been conveniently separated from the general arena of discussion (and dissemination), while technocratic solutions and the increasing centralization of the curriculum have been imposed, while the attack on the public school has been undertaken from different fronts. Fortunately, there is no shortage of well-founded analyses of the trends of western education in relation to the needs of capital, such as those of Nico Hirtt. However, the truth is that the social-democratic perspective has become absolutely dominant in the movement of response to neoliberal policies, while other currents of the left have not gone beyond generalities that are more or less “socialist.”

Karl Marx’s thought provides us with some clues from which it is possible to devise this possible alternative. Not in a dogmatic, catechistic way, but starting from the present material reality, just as the German genius did at his time together with Frederick Engels. Krupskaya and Lunacharsky were inspired by their ideas to build what was the most advanced educational system in the world a century ago, and these remain valid even today in taking account for and responding to the failure of the capitalist school in many aspects . Therefore, we will review its most significant aspects starting from the magnificent study of M.A. Manacorda.¹

Let us start from the idea, expressed by Manacorda and emphasized by various critical currents, that the school as it exists today is an institution that is historically connected to social structures that have been superseded. If the Jesuit model that inspired it was al-

¹ M.A. Manacorda (1979). *Marx y la pedagogía moderna [Marx and Modern Pedagogy]*. Barcelona: Oikos-Tau.

ready anachronistic when schooling became widespread, how is it not obsolete today, let alone in a future socialist society? That is why Marx and Engels already investigated this problem, which was crucial for Marxism not only because of the role that would be attributed to education on the road to communist society, but also in the struggle of the workers' movement for socio-economic, political rights and cultural aspects of the proletariat within the framework of bourgeois rule.

Engels, in his draft program for the League of Communists (1847), already established that, after the revolution, the political rule of the proletariat should serve to carry out broad "measures directed against private property and ensuring the livelihood of the proletariat." One of these measures, "emerging as the necessary result of existing relations," was the "education of all children, from the moment they can leave their mothers' care, in national establishments at national cost. Education and production together."²

Here, both democratic measures (universal and free public education) and socialist measures (union of education and labor) are intended for all children, and not only for the children of the proletarians. They are, therefore, measures of immediate application and universal, not merely temporary, validity. Note, moreover, that at the end of the paragraph Engels specifically states that all these measures "will become feasible and their centralizing effects [of State ownership] will develop in the same proportion as that in which the productive forces of the country are multiplied through the labor of the proletariat." It is important to point this out because the discussion of the priority of education or economic development for the construction of socialism will unfold around the plan for the Soviet educational system during the 1920s.

It is also worth noting the link established from the beginning with "existing relations," as a methodological principle that we must follow when it comes to outlining the future socialist school. But, above all, it is the link between education and labor, in addressing the pedagogical ideas of Marx and Engels, which is most shocking and alien to our conceptions of education. And reference should be made to *labor*, for its characterization in Marxist thought, and not to the labor market as is typical when this relationship is raised in the capitalist educational sphere (for example, when referring to

² F. Engels (1847). *Principles of Communism*, Question 18.

the “key competences” defined by the Lisbon Strategy for the EU).

Labor and the emancipation of the proletariat in Marx and Engels

For Marx, labor constitutes the specific character of the human being as a free and conscious activity (“for what is life, but activity,” he stated in 1844). Recall that Engels also said that labor is “the prime basic condition for all human existence,” to the extent that “labor created man himself.”³ But, in the conditions historically determined by the division of labor, it is degraded to “a means of satisfying a need – the need to maintain physical existence.” Under these conditions, the human being lives in the realm of necessity, not of freedom. Moreover, the worker is related to his own activity “as an alien activity not belonging to him,” and therefore the same happens with his own personal life, “an activity which is turned against him, independent of him and not belonging to him.” It is “self-estrangement.”⁴ “How does it happen,” Marx and Engels ask in *The German Ideology*, “that their relations assume an independent existence over and against them? and that the forces of their own life become superior to them? In short: division of labor.”⁵



“We need a new education for a new society and a new society
for a new education.” Karl Marx

³ F. Engels (1876). *The Part Played by Labor in the Transition from Ape to Man*. Peking: Foreign Languages Press (1975)

⁴ K. Marx (1844). Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 275.

⁵ K. Marx and F. Engels (1846). *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, Lawrence & Wishart, 2010, p. 93.

Thus, there is a negative expression of work, labor “‘subsumes’ individuals under a certain social class, predestining their position in life and their personal development.”⁶ The division between mental and manual labor “implies the possibility, nay the fact, that intellectual and material activity, that enjoyment and labor, production and consumption, devolve on different individuals, and that the only possibility of their not coming into contradiction lies in negating in its turn the division of labor.”⁷ Both the workers and the capitalists are limited to an existence marked by one-sidedness: if the worker has ended up becoming an appendage of the machine, placed before his own labor as something alien to him, the capitalist “regards the realization of the essential powers of man only as the realization of his own excesses, his whims and capricious, bizarre notions.”⁸ In the case of the worker, there is a contradiction “between the personality of the individual proletarian and his condition of life, as it is imposed on him, that is, his labor”; therefore, “the proletarians, in order to assert themselves, need to put an end to their own previous condition of existence, which is at the same time that of all previous society, that is, to put an end to labor..., and they need to tear down the State in order to impose their personality.” Whereas, in the previous stages, individuals established their relations as members of a class, “with the community of revolutionary proletarians, who take their conditions of existence and those of all members of society under their control, now it is quite the opposite: individuals take part as individuals.”⁹

Therefore, as we saw in *Principles of Communism*, the school based on the union of teaching and labor should welcome, in principle, all children and adolescents. As Engels observed, the schools created by the bourgeoisie for the workers condemned them to “a true and authentic moral atrophy and intellectual desolation”; but neither did the culture of the ruling classes allow them to rise mentally, given their traditional and eminently decorative character.¹⁰

Thus, it is a matter of returning to labor the undivided quality of human activity, but there is only one way to achieve it:

⁶ M.A. Manacorda, *Marx y la pedagogía moderna*, p. 51

⁷ K. Marx and F. Engels, *The German Ideology*, p. 45

⁸ K. Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, p. 315

⁹ M.A. Manacorda, *Marx y la pedagogía moderna*, p. 67-68.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 79-80.

“Thus things have now come to such a pass that the individuals must appropriate the existing totality of productive forces, not only to achieve self-activity, but, also, merely to safeguard their very existence.... The appropriation of these forces is itself nothing more than the development of the individual capacities corresponding to the material instruments of production. The appropriation of a totality of instruments of production is, for this very reason, the development of a totality of capacities in the individuals themselves.”¹¹.

Only the proletarians, “completely shut off from all self-activity,” and through a revolution that overthrows the previous mode of production and its social organization, can carry out such an appropriation. We thus arrive at the conscious element and the problem of political power. The suppression of private property implies the complete emancipation of all human qualities, and communism will be the appropriation of the human essence. “In fact, the realm of freedom begins just where labor determined by necessity or external purpose ends.” The human being is such as soon as he stops identifying with his own life activity in nature, to move on to knowing, wanting and organizing that activity as a relationship that, at least potentially, is a universal or *many-sided* relationship with all of nature, modifying himself and society.

For Marx, it is a matter of overcoming concrete alienation, the separation between labor and the manifestation of oneself, produced historically by the division of labor, which is presented as a division between intellectual and manual labor. In the factory, manual labor loses all character of specialization, but as soon as all special development ceases, the tendency to the *many-sided* development of the individual arises. Therefore, “the appropriation by individuals of the totality of productive forces” is necessary: to be able to exercise that political control that places labor at the service of the *many-sidedness* of the human being, culminating that tendency that Marx observes under capitalism.

The collective appropriation of the totality of the productive forces makes possible a *many-sidedness* that Manacorda defines as “the historical arrival of man to the totality of his abilities and, at

¹¹ K. Marx and F. Engels, *The German Ideology*, pp. 110-11.

the same time, to the totality of his ability to consume or enjoy in which, as we already know, we must consider above all the enjoyment of cultural elements, in addition to the material ones, from which the worker has been excluded as a result of the division of labor.”¹² Thus, “the absolute manifestation of the subjective, creative faculties of man” will be possible, which appears as universally available in the different human aspects, including production, in which “he is in a position to face, as an *individual*, the variation of technology.” This is, according to Manacorda, the manifestation of the human being: “many-sided labor, and non-labor just as many-sidedly as the development of the universal powers of the human brain.” From this it follows in a pedagogical manner that, to reintegrate the various human abilities “demands the reunification of the structures of science with those of production.”¹³

Moreover, insofar as this division also affects the moral sphere, alienating the human being by establishing different rules for human behavior in the economic, moral and religious sphere,¹⁴ it is also necessary to “reintegrate a unitary principle of behavior”; and this requires not only a pedagogical theory and an educational system that reintegrates these spheres, but “an educational praxis that is based on a mode of being that is the most associative and collective possible within him and is, at the same time, linked to the social reality that surrounds him.”¹⁵

Along the same lines, Engels affirmed that the abolition of private property will allow for the development of the productive forces, making impossible a society divided into classes, born of the division of labor, since it will require people to develop their aptitudes in all senses. Here we have the principle of *polytechnic education*, but also its condition: the development of socialized production:

“It is necessary to develop correlatively the aptitudes of the men who use these means.... the communal operation of production by society as a whole and the resulting new

¹² M.A. Manacorda, *Marx y la pedagogía moderna*, p. 89-90.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 93-94.

¹⁴ Marx presents prostitution and the slave trade as examples of this division in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, p. 310.

¹⁵ M.A. Manacorda, *Marx y la pedagogía moderna*, p. 83.

development of production will both require and generate an entirely different kind of human material. Communal operation of production cannot be carried on by people as they are today, when each individual is subordinated to a single branch of production, bound to it, exploited by it, and has developed only *one* of his faculties at the expense of all others, knows only *one* branch, or even one branch of a single branch of production as a whole. Even present-day industry is finding such people less and less useful. Communal planned industry operated by society as a whole presupposes human beings with many-sided talents and the capacity to oversee the system of production in its entirety. The division of labor which makes a peasant of one man, a cobbler of another, a factory worker of a third, a stock-market operator of a fourth, has already been undermined by machinery, and will completely disappear. Education will enable young people quickly to familiarize themselves with the whole system of production and to pass successively from one branch of production to another in response to the needs of society or their own inclinations. It will therefore free them from the one-sided character which the present-day division of labor impresses on every individual. Society organized on a communist basis will thus give its members the opportunity to put their many-sidedly developed talents to many-sided use. But when this happens classes will necessarily disappear.”¹⁶

In this way, “the rounded development of the capacities of all members of society through the elimination of the present division of labor, through industrial education, through alternating activities” will be, together with others, the main results of the suppression of private property. The union of education and productive labor must be based on learning about the whole system of production, since the aim of education is to develop young people *many-sidedly*, with the practical result of making them available to alternate their activity, according to social needs and their own inclinations.

¹⁶ F. Engels, *Principles of Communism*, Question 20.

The character of education

In the *Principles*, Engels referred to “industrial education”. Marx also mentioned “industrial education” at the same period, in the discussions that would lead to *Wage Labor and Capital*, pointing out its utopian and reformist character:

“Another favorite proposition of the bourgeoisie is education, in particular universal industrial education.... The true meaning that education has acquired among philanthropic economists is this: to train each worker in as many branches of work as possible so that, if the introduction of new machines or a change of work would lead to him being expelled from one branch, he can more easily find the systematization in another.”¹⁷

How can one not think about the aforementioned “key competences” and the conclusions of Nico Hirtt? How can one not compare this preparation for the labor market and for the generation of surplus value with training for the full development of human abilities that characterizes the pedagogical ideas of Marx and Engels, as we have pointed out?

Be that as it may, Marx would remove this contradiction with the formulation of his comrade, to take up the rest of the formulation of Engels on education in the *Communist Manifesto*. There it is



¹⁷ M.A. Manacorda, *Marx y la pedagogía moderna*, p. 25

mentioned, as part of the immediate measures that the proletariat will take after the seizure of power, to revolutionize all forms of production:

“Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of children’s factory labor in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production.”

The reference to the free and public character of education is modified, the reference to age disappears and the abolition of child labor in the factory “in its present form” is advocated, given that “industrial education” cannot be positive without this abolition. In this way, the union of education and productive material labor is maintained, but not in the capitalist factory as it is, because this does not eliminate the division of labor, since only political intervention can give this a liberating function, as has already been mentioned.

At this point it is interesting to point out, along with Manacorda, the fact that the historicity of social formations is, in Marx, the presupposition of every critical analysis of existing structures; along with this, historical development is also the basis on which its conclusions on what future society should be are based, because “with all the miseries it imposes upon them, the present system simultaneously engenders the *material conditions* and the *social forms* necessary for an economical reconstruction of society.”¹⁸

“From the Factory system budded, as Robert Owen has shown us in detail, the germ of the education of the future, an education that will, in the case of every child over a given age, combine productive labor with instruction and gymnastics, not only as one of the methods of adding to the efficiency of production, but as the only method of producing fully developed human beings.”¹⁹

¹⁸ K. Marx (1865). *Wages, Price and Profit*. Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1975, p. 78. Shortly thereafter, he would write: “the historical development of the antagonisms, immanent in a given form of production, is the only way in which that form of production can be dissolved and a new form established.” K. Marx. *Capital* (1867), Volume I. Part IV, Chap. XV. Machinery and Modern Industry. Section 9, International Publishers, New York, 1967, p. 488.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 483-84.

Thus it is quite clear that the school does not escape this historical perspective, as well as the forcefulness (“the only method”) with which Marx establishes his conclusions about future education. In the next to last paragraph quoted the horrific reality of child labor in the British factories of the mid-19th century is evident. We have already briefly mentioned the tendency towards *many-sidedness* that Marx noted in the capitalist factory system. Indeed, for Marx the demand for *many-sidedness* stems from the versatility to which the industrial worker of his time is subjected:

“Modern industry never looks upon and treats the existing form of a process as final... it is continually causing changes not only in the technical basis of production, but also in the functions of the laborer, and in the social combinations of the labor-process. At the same time, it thereby also revolutionizes the division of labor within the society, and incessantly launches masses of capital and of workpeople from one branch of production to another. Modern industry, by its very nature, therefore necessitates variation of labor, fluency of function, universal mobility of the laborer.... Modern industry, through its catastrophes imposes the necessity of recognizing, as a fundamental law of production, variation of work, consequently fitness of the laborer for varied work, consequently the greatest possible development of his varied aptitudes. It becomes a question of life and death for society to adapt the mode of production to the normal functioning of this law. Modern Industry, indeed, compels society, under penalty of death, to replace the detail-worker of to-day, grappled by life-long repetition of one and the same trivial operation, and thus reduced to the mere fragment of a man, by the fully developed individual, fit for a variety of labors, ready to face any change of production, and to whom the different social functions he performs, are but so many modes of giving free scope to his own natural and acquired powers.”²⁰

Despite the barbarity in which the instruction established by the so-called educational clauses of the Factory Acts, described by

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 486, 487-88.

Marx in the same chapter,²¹ was developed, elementary education *in the factory* had become a mandatory condition of work for children under fourteen years.²² In addition, the bourgeoisie had also taken steps towards greater versatility of the workers, on the basis of large industry, through schools for workers: polytechnic, agronomic and “professional education.” It is the kind of instruction that Marx had criticized twenty years earlier because, as he recalled again, there “the children of the workingmen receive some little instruction in technology and in the practical handling of the various implements of labor.” This is by no means sufficient to make possible a *many-sided* human being and results in the alienating aspect of labor, since the worker continues to be pushed and harassed by the variation of a science and technology separated from him, which incessantly changes his working conditions and demands from him a skill without content. Only “when the working class comes into power, as inevitably it must, technical instruction, both theoretical and practical, will take its proper place in the working-class schools,”²³ in line with the ideas pointed out by Engels twenty years earlier about the elimination of the division of labor.

During these years, then, Marx uses two terms in his articles around which one can build what will be the school of the future: “polytechnic” instruction and “technological education.” The first, as shown by the “poly-professional” school granted by the bourgeoisie to the workers, implies the availability or versatility for different forms of labor or changes in labor, which is positive because it is counterposed to the division of labor characteristic of the factory. The second supposes the unity of theory and practice, advancing towards the *many-sidedness* of the human being, no longer limited to one or another aspect of production, so that it is opposed to the division between manual and intellectual labor.

Marx, therefore, derived from the material reality existing in his time, in which the education of children was already developed in the factory itself, and with a perceptible tendency to poly-professional education, the emancipatory proposal of a *many-sided* training that would contributed to developing all aspects of the hu-

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 482-84.

²² *Ibid.*, fn. 2, p. 482.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 488. M.A. Manacorda, *Marx y la pedagogía moderna*, p. 90

man personality, in close connection with production, putting an end to the old division of labor and therefore to class differences; this would not be possible without the seizure of power by the proletariat.

It is important to note that, as Manacorda pointed out, this approach implies “the whole of Marxism.” Because, in effect, it includes not only the content of historical materialism, but also “the whole theory of the *dialectical movement* of what is real,” which contemplates the formation of contradictory aspects, a contradiction that becomes aggravated until it becomes an absolute antagonism, which will open the door to its superseding through the conscious intervention of the human being.²⁴ As Manacorda emphasizes, Marx coordinates, “with the verification of the natural and spontaneous process, the reason for voluntary and conscious intervention... destined to make the contradiction explode— in this case, between the conditions of the worker and the objective demand for *many-sided* people – and to move from the reality of a productive development, which exists only in the contradiction, to the possibility of eliminating this contradiction.”²⁵ Indeed, with socialism the tendency towards the many-sided nature of the human being will no longer be in contradiction with the existing social relations of production, as it is under capitalism, but will be an objective to be achieved through the organization of production: labor, education, etc.

“A question of life or death,” “a skill without content”.... These are statements that, a century and a half later, are still familiar to us as soon as we know the discussions about the relationship between the school and the productive system. Indeed, it is evident that the educational systems of the main capitalist economies promote, even more massively and in a more structured way than in the past, and in the face of the uncertainties that have shaken capitalist production since the great crisis of the seventies, the combining of education with production, both in the school and in the workplaces: training cycles, “key competencies,” subjects related to the economy and the enterprise, active methodologies..., they promote the versatility (certainly limited by the needs of social reproduction) of the future labor force and its adaptation to different work environments, and provide the strictly necessary rudiments of technology,

²⁴ M.A. Manacorda, *Marx y la pedagogía moderna*, p. 40-41.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, P. 44

applied science, organization of labor, desirable values (including political education) and “social skills.” There does not seem to be, therefore, great differences of substance in the historical reality from which the school of our future must emerge.

Starting from these bases (although there is also the possibility that chronologically the document we are going to analyze was the starting point for the definitive edition of Volume I of *Capital*), Marx made his pedagogical ideas even more concrete when he formulated them programmatically. Thus, in the Instructions to the Delegates of the London Provisional Committee to the First Congress of the International, in Geneva (1866), he touched on those points “that gave immediate impetus to the needs of the class struggles and the organization of the workers as a class,”²⁶ among which were the problems related to education. These were measures that had to be imposed by the force of the State, that is, through the seizure of political power by the proletariat.

According to Marx’s *Instructions*, which started from the trend recorded by modern industry, the Congress established that “In a rational state of society every child whatever, from the age of 9 years, ought to become a productive laborer,” as repugnant as this would still be in the manner in which child labor exists under capitalism.²⁷ Children and young people would be divided into three classes, with different hours of work, both industrial and domestic: two hours for children from nine to twelve years old; four for those thirteen to fifteen; and six hours (with one hour of rest) for those sixteen and seventeen years old.²⁸ However, all productive labor in these age groups would be accompanied by a cultural training, which would include intellectual education, physical education (and military exercises) and “technological training, which imparts the general scientific foundations of all the processes of production, and that, at the same time, would introduce the child and the adolescent

²⁶ F. Mehring (1916). *Carlos Marx y los primeros tiempos de la Internacional (Karl Marx and the early days of the International)*. Mexico, Grijalbo, 1968, p. 62

²⁷ Marx, Instructions for the Delegates of the Provisional General Council, in Marx & Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 20, p. 188

²⁸ Note that the Soviet educational system, inaugurated in 1918, would establish the only general polytechnic school for children and young people between eight and seventeen years of age.

to the practical use of and the ability to handle the elementary tools of all trades.” And Marx added in his *Instructions*: “The combination of paid productive labor, mental education, bodily exercise and polytechnic training, will raise the working class far above the level of the higher and middle classes.”²⁹

Here, it is important to emphasize the theoretical and practical aspect of technological education (mentioned also in *Capital*, as we have noted), which aims to include, “from *many sides*, the scientific foundations of *all* the processes of production and the practical aspects of *all* trades,” since what is at issue is to free the human being “from servitude to a single branch of production.”³⁰

This is the type of theoretical and practical knowledge that, by allowing the human being to achieve *many-sidedness*, is considered superior to any other type of education that may have existed. Under capitalism, Marx will say in 1869 before the General Council of the International, technological training “was meant to compensate for the deficiencies occasioned by the division of labor which prevented apprentices from acquiring a thorough knowledge of their business.” This had been “misconstructed into what the middle class understood by technical education.”³¹ It is a matter of acquiring “basic knowledge, that is, the scientific and technological bases of production, and the ability to work... with both one’s brain and one’s hands, because this corresponds to total human development.” In contrast to the “pluri-professionalism” advanced by the bourgeoisie, Marx opposes the *many-sidedness* of a complete human being who, “conscious of the process that is developing, dominates it and is not dominated by it.”³²

Regarding the concrete content of the education, Marx’s presentations before the General Council of the International show his interest in not “introducing subjects that allow a party or class interpretation,” neither in elementary schools nor in higher ones, but that these should be learned outside of school, in contact with adults “in the daily struggle for life.” This is the case of political economy.

²⁹ Marx & Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 20, p. 189. M.A. Manacorda, *Marx y la pedagogía moderna*, p. 33

³⁰ M.A. Manacorda, *Marx y la pedagogía moderna*, p. 34.

³¹ Record of Marx’s Speeches on General Education, in Marx & Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, p. 399.

³² M.A. Manacorda, *Marx y la pedagogía moderna*, p. 105

“Only subjects such as the natural sciences, grammar, etc., should be taught in school”: “incontrovertible notions that do not lead to conclusions of a personal nature.”³³

For Manacorda, this idea of Marx “tends to exclude from education all propaganda, all content that is not an immediate acquisition of knowledge,” in order to build “a rigorous education of notions and techniques.” But he would not leave aside humanist knowledge, which is probably alluded to with that “intellectual education” of the *Instructions* of 1866. Simply put, this last type of learning would correspond in his view to the “realm of freedom,” to the development of human abilities, and it would find its place in “daily life, in intellectual dealings with adults,” while technical-scientific knowledge (those “incontrovertible notions”), and with it the school, would remain in the “realm of necessity,” where children would appropriate from “a totality of possibilities of mastery over nature and over man himself.”³⁴ Therefore, this could be interpreted as an accentuation of the “scientific” content in the school, either as “elements of objective rigor,” or as “content of a total scope that allow a general understanding of the natural and human world.”³⁵

The rest of the intellectual enjoyments (the “realm of freedom”) would be left outside of the “school structure,” together with the adults, in “life,” as has been said: it is “the realm of individual vocations, of disinterested, not immediately productive activities.” These, being an integral part of the human being, must also enter into their education.³⁶ There is no doubt that such an approach is consistent with concern for a school linked to life: that is, to the world of adults, either in production (as happened in the pre-industrial stage) or in the development of intellectual enjoyments, in contrast to the separation produced by the bourgeois school between the world of children and the world of adults. Marxism would insist on this theme, both in the socialist countries – especially in Russia during the first years of the Narkompros [People’s Commissariat for Education], and in general where the tendency has been to integrate the school with the factory, identifying the school not only with

³³ Ibid., p. 100 and 117.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 113-114 and 118.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 121.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 121.

teaching, but also with education – and with particular interest, in the West, since Gramsci.

Such an approach can have, finally, a pedagogic sense: taking into account that the working class had obtained its learning, traditionally, in a dyadic relationship with an adult (in the artisan workshop or in the family, not in a school or similar institution), through which he or she would receive both technical and cultural elements of education: a type of learning that would be forbidden to the children of working families with the imposition of the factory system to the detriment of handicraft production.

We have insisted on the method used by Marx to obtain his conclusions about the education of the future; but we are also interested in including here a reference made by Marx, in the *Critique of the Gotha Program* (1875), to the more or less immediate educational demands of the working class, in its struggle with the bourgeois state. This brings us back to the element of conscious intervention, already mentioned, and to the different perspective posed by the socio-political framework (bourgeois or socialist) in which the school develops. Bear in mind that, according to his presentation before the General Council of the International in August 1869, Marx was well aware of the insufficiency of the educational system to transform the society from which it emerges, but at the same time he warned against the temptation to renounce combat in this field until such time as the revolution had disrupted social relations: “On the one hand, a change in social conditions is required to create a corresponding educational system and, on the other hand, a corresponding system is required for education to be able to change social conditions.”³⁷ The richness of this double admonition is evidenced by the fact that this has been one of the bases of critical thinking of the Marxist tradition on education through today.

In the first place, Marx reproaches the German Socialists for their demand for “equal education for all people,” raising the question: “Is it believed that in present-day society (and it is only with his one has to deal [since it is a matter of demands that can be made in bourgeois society]), education can be equal for all classes? Or is it demanded that the upper classes also shall be compulsorily reduced to the modicum of education -- the elementary school -- that alone is compatible with the economic conditions not only of the

³⁷ Ibid., p. 98 and 106.

wage workers but of the peasants as well?”³⁸ And, indeed, since the school is an instrument for reproduction of social inequalities, an “apparatus of hegemony” as Gramsci would state, how can we believe that the bourgeoisie in power will provide the same type of education to those who are destined to constitute the elite and to the children of the subaltern classes? Indeed, only through the seizure of power by the proletariat is it possible to consider the possibility of a school equal for all; and that, with numerous problems and deep debates, as will be seen after the October Revolution. Thus, in 1869 Marx was against free higher education, since it was a preserve of the bourgeoisie.³⁹

For Marx – who would insist here on the central concepts that we have already analyzed – the entire Gotha Program, “for all its democratic clang, is tainted through and through by the Lassallean sect’s servile belief in the state, or, what is no better, by a democratic belief in miracles.” Therefore, he warned against the emptiness of the demand for compulsory attendance for all and free instruction. And, what seems to us more interesting, he condemned the “education of the people by the State,” demanded in the Program, and advocated that “Government and church should rather be equally excluded from any influence on the school, particularly, indeed, in the Prusso-German Empire.”⁴⁰ In 1869, Marx had defended before the General Council of the International that “state education is considered as education under the control of the government, but this is not absolutely indispensable.... Education can be public, without being under the control of the government,”⁴¹ which could appoint inspectors to monitor respect for the laws, but without interfering in education. A nuance full of meaning at a time when the workers’ movement was beginning to set up its own educational institutions, outside the bourgeois system, which was deeply alienating as we have already said. Thus, for example, the Third Congress of the International (Brussels, 1868) had approved organizing conferences on science and economy for workers, given the lack of official

³⁸ K. Marx (1875). *Critique of the Gotha Programme*. Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1972, p. 30.

³⁹ M.A. Manacorda, *Marx y la pedagogía moderna*, p. 99

⁴⁰ K. Marx. *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 31

⁴¹ M.A. Manacorda, *Marx y la pedagogía moderna*, p. 98-99.

schools.⁴² On the other hand, in 1871 Marx would applaud the measures taken by the Paris Commune in this regard:

“The whole of the educational institutions were opened to the people gratuitously, and at the same time cleared of all interference of Church and State. Thus, not only was education made accessible to all, but science itself freed from the fetters which class prejudice and governmental force had imposed upon it.”⁴³

This was not an obstacle to defending those measures that could advance the proletariat towards socialism. Thus, “the paragraph on the schools should at least have demanded technical schools (theoretical and practical) in combination with the elementary school,” thus expounding one of his main arguments.⁴⁴

Marx also rejected the general prohibition of child labor without indicating the age limit, as being naïve and reactionary, “since, with a strict regulation of the working time according to the different age groups and other safety measures for the protection of children, an early combination of productive labor with education is one of the most potent means for the transformation of present-day society,” by undermining the basis of the division of labor, as has already been pointed out.⁴⁵ It seems that what he wanted to vindicate, in the immediate term, was the union between education and productive labor that would characterize the future school. This would aggravate the contradictions already mentioned, through conscious intervention, in order to bring nearer the day when they stop being so by imposing new social relations of production. In effect, according to Manacorda, this fact meant introducing the child to modern production, in order to give rise to more advanced forms of life and social relations, in addition to bringing to the working class a higher

⁴² Ibid., P. 101

⁴³ K. Marx (1871). Address of the General Council of the International Working Men’s Association on the civil war in France in 1871 [May 30, 1871]. In K. Marx, *The Civil War in France*. Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1966, p. 71.

⁴⁴ K. Marx. *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 30.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 32

form of education, stripped of the old handicraft and peasant training.⁴⁶

In regard to this, Manacorda considered how labor, by combining it with education, could constitute the content and method for the formation of the many-sided human being, if that labor is the condition of his subjugation. And he concluded that

“It is not really labor as an educational process or part of it, which can by itself reverse the social condition and free man.... But this real participation of labor as an educational process in social transformation will be more effective insofar as it is not a mere didactic ingenuity, but a real introduction to the social process of labor, a union between educational and productive structures, which does not necessarily mean the union of “school and factory,” since the two terms are not equally necessary to modern society, as the “school” represents a leftover from previous social organizations; but it certainly means a union of education with production.”⁴⁷

However, although the school is certainly a leftover of another time, a bourgeois institution (or even before the bourgeois system, as already mentioned), is it not true that it underwent a transformation, since the end of the 19th century, that ended turning it into an apparatus of hegemony over the subordinate classes, and therefore these were channeled toward the state school, instead of being able to have their own class instruments to make their right to education outside the State effective? As Manacorda points out, the school has developed “within, but mainly around and outside of the world of production,” and it has tended to increasingly identify teaching and education. “A school that is limited to teaching understood as an instrument, as a possession of certain techniques, that renounces the aims of education and the ‘formation of views,’ would not be conceivable at present.”⁴⁸ In fact, the approach of a Gramsci or a Krupskaya, already present in a historical context that was very different from that of Marx, differs markedly from the one presented here.

⁴⁶ M.A. Manacorda, *Marx y la pedagogía moderna*, p. 103

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 61

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 115

This is not a contemplative exercise, but a matter of trying to situate the dominant tendencies in order to define the school corresponding to our own future. It should be remembered that even the manner of carrying out the combination of education and production produced a lot of headaches for the Bolsheviks at the end of the 1920s; but perhaps the answer is, as Manacorda points out at the end of the last paragraph quoted, more in this essential aspect than in the institution in which it should be carried out. For this author, the consequence of the separation between science and labor under capitalism is the objective tendency to “form a life of the community where science and labor belong to all individuals. That is, the school cannot be seen in any other way than as the educational process where science and labor coincide.” A non-speculative but operational science; a non-partial labor, but one coordinated as much as possible with the technology of the factory.⁴⁹

There is no doubt, in short, that the tools elaborated by Marx allow us to conclude, in our opinion, that the bourgeois school points to the future socialist school with as much or greater clarity than a hundred years ago. It is up to us to put them face to face, to expose the true character of bourgeois education and, with the aid of the Marxist method, to point out a path of emancipation, from inside and outside the classroom.

March, 2018

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 71

Tunisia

Workers' Party of Tunisia – PTT Jilani Hammami

An Approach to the Unity of the Left, or Reflections on a Big “Left” Party

Since the defeat of the lists presented by the parties and organizations of the left in the elections to the Constituent Assembly in October 2011 in Tunisia, the question of the unity of the left has continued to be posed. At the founding congress of his party: the Party of Unified Patriotic Democrats, Chokri Belaid had launched the idea of the formation of a large party of the left. Since then, the idea has continued to be debated. We present here the point of view that we expressed during these discussions.

1. A legitimate aspiration

Comrade martyr Chokri Belaid was the first one who called for the formation of a big left party in one of the meetings of the Popular Front. His call was repeated by the leaders of the Popular Front more than once and on more than one occasion. This slogan did not meet any explicit opposition from any of the parties in the left arena in Tunisia.

On the contrary, many members of these parties and their non-party supporters received this idea with much enthusiasm; some of them considered it a promise and commitment to realize it and longed for its actual achievement.

But things did not change, the idea became a dead letter, just a slogan, which led to a sort of despair.

We believe that, to be faithful to the spirit of the martyr and in response to the aspirations of wide circles of our members, sympathizers and friends, it is high time to focus on this subject with the necessary care. We must at least start the intellectual and political debate, studying it based on general principles with more clarity and precision. We must see if the objective and subjective conditions are sufficient to take the necessary steps towards the maturation of the idea of creating a “big party of the left,” since we have not yet heard of any objection of principle on the matter.

But while it is necessary to begin the debate, we must not fall into haste.

This is a subject that needs much wisdom to deal with and much precision to observe the central issues that need to be given priority in research and debate, so that energy would not be wasted in marginal or partial aspects to reach the first and fundamental goal of setting up the solid foundations of the framework to be built. With the same precision we must determine the methodological process to be followed in dealing with those central issues.

The reasons for calling for the unification of the left factions, which were mostly formed into parties after the revolution, are numerous and give this aspiration an undisputable legitimacy. However, because of the importance of this subject we must not deal with it emotionally, but in a principled and rational way, not only regarding its contents, which have to be discussed and summarized, but also regarding the methodological process to be followed.

We in the Workers' Party believe that the process of forming this type of party must be carried out with a conscious vision, will and determination and a systematic and rational perception under the supervision of a central united leadership which incarnates this will. It must devote the needed effort of planning, production and follow-up, and must have the necessary tools of research and implementation so that this work would be purposeful and not become a futile and sterile intellectual discussion.

2. Let us first agree on concepts and terms

There is talk nowadays among the members of the parties of the "left" and those of the supporters of the Popular Front in general about the formation of a big left party.

We believe that, regardless of the general political motives and even the legitimate emotional ardor which moves the feelings of many of our comrades and friends, we have to acknowledge the lack of clarity around this slogan.

Although we can find among many of them justification for their enthusiasm, this should not prevent us from putting things right and clarifying the slogan. Allow me, comrades, to begin with the contradiction in the ambiguous slogan "party of the left." Actually a "party" is one thing, and "left" is another, and each of these concepts have their own characteristics that are not always compatible with one another, although they are not contradictory.

The word “left” itself is one of the concepts that needs serious debate to dispel the ambiguity surrounding it. If we do not agree on the meaning and significance of this term, the slogan “unite the left” into one big party, even if we add to it whatever qualifications we want, such as the “Marxist left” or the “revolutionary left,” it will remain a general and loose term and at best an exclusively political one, with a relatively ambiguous meaning that needs more precision. From our point of view in the Workers Party, this is different from what we understand by the term “party,” which we believe necessitates more precise criteria from the point of view of ideology, political program, and organization. Thus we believe that without this clarification, the “unification” into a “party of the left,” in spite of the good intentions and revolutionary objectives behind it, will remain just a general, utopian and conciliatory slogan that will not succeed over time.

The political discourse in Tunisia, as in all countries, call left anyone who claims, even only in words, to be socialist and supports the demands of the workers, laboring people and other popular categories. This creates a lot of confusion and ambiguity between actual militants of the left and those who claim to be left but in fact are nothing more than agents of the bourgeoisie in the working class. Some parties call themselves “socialist” and pretend to be leftist but they follow openly neoliberal policies and on an international level act like the imperialist forces that violate the rights of the workers and peoples.

It is well known that those who have caused the most damage and distortion to scientific socialism are those currents such as “social democracy,” “moderate socialism” and the “new socialism”, and those calling themselves “critical socialists” and other such names.

There is no greater hostility than that of those enemies, who launch the fiercest attacks on Marxism and its ideas. They deny the principle of class struggle and the antagonistic contradiction between capitalism and socialism. They demonize the dictatorship of the proletariat and distort fundamental principles of scientific socialism such as democratic centralism and others, under the pretext of fighting against dogmatism and overcoming the failure of the experience of socialist construction and other empty arguments. Despite all that, they call themselves leftists. This is what Lenin said about them:

“If we judge people not by the brilliant uniforms they don, not by the high-sounding appellations they give themselves, but by their actions, and by what they actually advocate, it will be clear that [what they call freedom to develop] Social-Democracy [meaning Marxism] is the freedom to introduce bourgeois ideas and bourgeois elements into Socialism.”

This can be said in general. But in Tunisia, if what is meant by the term “left” is the forces that adopt today, at the current stage of the revolutionary process and of our people’s fight, certain political, economic and social objectives with their patriotic content, then that is another matter.

This has its own framework, regardless of the nature of these forces or whether they belong to the “left” or not.

In fact, in the context of the progressive struggle this revolutionary program can be adopted by various revolutionary political forces, that is, those who are working for a radical change in our society, economy, and political system, in contradiction with imperialism and the big comprador bourgeoisie.

Even if we agree that it is a question of a “left” program based on radical change, the organizational framework which will lead the struggle for its achievement cannot be a party in the Leninist sense of this term, but it will be a party based on “common agreements.” That means it will have an organizational framework of the forces that agree on the common struggle on the basis of a common political program, leaving to each of these forces their own ideological and organizational specifics; otherwise it will not be possible to achieve a common struggle and a common program.

That is why we believe that this program does not need a party as the form of organization. In fact, a united front such as that which we have in Tunisia, despite all the obstacles, could be an appropriate form.

It is worth noting that the difficulties we face in the Popular Front in Tunisia are not fundamentally due to the nature of the organizational form but they are due to other aspects of our work in the Front, some political, some organizational, and others related to the style of work and the remnants of the negative inheritance of sectarianism that we have not yet gotten rid of.

So, when we call for the unification of the movements of the left into a big united party we must be very careful to watch out for misunderstandings that it may contain.

If the objective is to create an organizational form to achieve the tactical revolutionary program we mentioned above, we must recognize that this form will be open to all parties that adopt this program regardless of their ideological reference points or their relationship to socialism, their identity or the classes they represent.

They are naturally parties representing all the classes interested in this program, such as workers, peasants, public servants and professionals, artisans and even the middle bourgeoisie affected by the invasion of the foreign capitalists with their capital and commodities.

So the organizational form which will group all these political expressions of these various social strata necessitates a temporary framework that will last for the period of the realization of such a program.

We believe that its most appropriate and efficient organizational form is that of a front, whose structure, methods of organization and style of work should be defined on the basis of the content of the program, the degree of unity and harmony around it.

We should not be surprised if the front takes a form close to that of a party, particularly if the agreement within it is based on a thorough progressive program that includes close political forces in terms of overall trends and objectives surrounded by social forces sharing many characteristics and aspirations.

But in any case the front cannot be a party in the precise scientific meaning of the term, that is, a general staff of classes that expresses the interests of the workers or those of the bourgeoisie or other classes.

The party of the “left” in the Marxist-Leninist sense in general, means, in our opinion, in Tunisia, the parties committed to scientific socialism, Marxism-Leninism, as their world view, as a tool of analysis of capitalism and the role of the working class in this historical stage, apart from the experiences that followed from those of the Bolshevik Party, even though these had a positive enrichment.

In other words, if the term “left” in the general political sense, is a term, among us, that includes forces of Marxist origin and Arab nationalist ones, then the term “party of the left,” from a Marxist point of view, only concerns the forces that adopt Marxism as an

ideological and political reference and that are inspired by their organizational models.

Despite this fundamental difference, we believe that the unification of the Marxists in their own party does not contradict their participation in a larger structure in which they find a platform of agreement on a minimal program that helps them and others to achieve the tasks of this stage.

On the contrary, the unification of the Marxists in their own party, like the unification of other left parties of nationalist orientations in a strong united nationalist party or organization, is a factor of strength for the common organizational framework, which is the front.

3. The ideological, political and organizational bases of the party

The struggle of the working class against bourgeois exploitation and oppression at one of the stages of its development may produce many organizational forms reflecting the ideology that prevails in the ranks of the working class or revolutionary intellectual circles that aspire to become their legitimate representatives.

Taking this into account, we see in the various parties that speak in the name of the working class in Tunisia, and adopt its thought and aspirations, a natural product in a given period of the struggle of the working class and the Tunisian people as a whole, at a given stage of the spread of scientific socialist thought in the ranks



of the workers and laboring people in our country.

This is both an objective and subjective result, first because it is the result of the class struggle in our country, and second because it reflects the level of consciousness achieved by the revolutionary vanguard within and outside of the working class.

In other words, if we think of overcoming these divisions, we need a certain number of objective conditions in the general struggle in our country, and most importantly the workers' conscious participation in the political activity in a way that imposes new advanced tasks in the present context. It also needs the left parties to understand the necessity to overcome the causes of the division and the common conviction that the success of the working class in defeating its class enemy and demolishing its system of exploitation requires its unity as a class conscious that it is fighting for its interests under the banner of a united General Staff.

So, the unification of all the groups and all the forms of the working class struggle requires the unity of programs, objectives and plans. This unity can only take place under a united leadership. So the unity of the revolutionaries in one united organization is at the same time a condition, an objective and a result of a process of struggle and conscious work.

The elements of unity of the party of the working class are multi-dimensional, forming an integrated and harmonious line ideologically, politically and organizationally.

In other words, the unity of the party entrusted with the role of changing the society strategically from a society of exploitation, oppression and modern slavery into a society free from the exploitation of one human being by another, free from classes and class struggle, is built and based on a revolutionary political line, that is the program of the revolution which precisely defines the nature of the fundamental and secondary contradictions that divide society. This program defines the immediate and long-term tasks, that is, the tactics of the revolution and its strategic objective.

This program cannot be really revolutionary if it is not based on a revolutionary theory that studies and understands the characteristics of the historical stage of our society in the context of the evolution of human society as a whole.

No one actually has thoroughly understood these characteristics and developed its alternatives more than the scientific socialist thought which took advantage of the philosophical, economic, so-

cial and political contributions that preceded it. This is what has been acquired through the different revolutionary experiences known by the modern human society. It has been enriched by the experiences accumulated, which still need deepening and developing according to the progress in different fields so that it could answer the challenges at all levels, economic, political, intellectual, scientific and social.

During about 60 years of intellectual activity and revolutionary practice, Marx and Engels laid the foundations of scientific socialist thought on the general theoretical, philosophical, intellectual plane. They presented a comprehensive and coherent theory. It includes the big fundamental answers to the problems of contemporary class society, bourgeois society.

The struggles of the working class and people, particularly in Europe and the countries of the East have developed the theory until it became essential component of this.

The best example is what Lenin and the Bolsheviks did during the stages of the struggle against Tsarism, then at the head of the Soviets and during the construction of socialism.

So we see the only possibility for the party of the working class in our country is to adopt this theory, which represents the finest of human thought, the general intellectual heritage of scientific socialism.

This party can only succeed in developing the general line and program for the revolution in Tunisia by relying on the laws of dialectical and historical materialism as an authentic theoretical reference in a clear and unambiguous opposition to all the political concoctions that accompanied the emergence and development of scientific socialist thought, to all the distortions developed by bourgeois and petty bourgeois “critical” theories, or those which claimed to adopt scientific socialism but actually distorted it.

The working class needs, besides the scientific socialist reference and the specific revolutionary program, an organized general staff that embodies the highest degree of consciousness, a united organized vanguard leadership that thinks, plans and leads all the struggles, from the simplest to the most complex activity, that is, the Marxist-Leninist party.

At the very beginning of the experience of the organization of the party of the working class, Marxism fought fierce battles with

many points of view, schools and spontaneous, trade unionist, reformist and anarchist (Bakuninist) experiences.

Lenin fought similar conflicts with contemporary forms and experiences against Menshevism and the populist groups created by the social-democratic currents at that time in Russia and also against the experiences of other countries (Rosa Luxemburg) and at the international level (remnants of the Second International and the beginning of the Third International).

As a result of this bitter struggle in the field of organization, there developed the party of the Leninist type, based on democratic centralism as the exemplary model of revolutionary organization. This concretized the supremacy of consciousness over spontaneity, the superiority of conscious democracy over formal democracy and bureaucracy, and the superiority of revolutionary unity over the methods of coexistence of different lines and conciliation with the petty bourgeoisie.

These three pillars of the Marxist-Leninist party line embody the theoretical, political and class identity of the party of the working class: scientific socialism, a revolutionary political program and an organizational line of the Leninist type.

As Lenin said, in order to unite, and before we can unite we must first clarify our differences, that is, we must deepen the debate on the characteristics of these three pillars which may involve differences among us that we have not yet seen. The more we deepen the debate about known and possible differences, the more we will be able to overcome them in a way that enables us to crystallize clear and precise conclusions that constitute the real guarantee of a successful experience of unification.

4. Many obstacles and many encouraging factors

Let us say frankly that the formation of a “big party of the left” in the sense that we explained above, a party that unites the Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries in Tunisia, requires above all the consciousness that what unites us in appearance is important, but what may divide us can be of equal or greater importance. There is no escape from studying our differences consciously, frankly and boldly.

We have had a bitter experience inherited from the era of infernal conflicts and hasty judgments filled with subjectivity and sectarianism, which deepened over decades fed by confrontations in the area of the trade unions, youth and general policy.

Besides this self-flagellation, this reflects an objective reality because of the multiple political forms that claim to represent the working class necessarily lead, especially in the stage of spreading socialist ideas within the working class, to divisions and confrontations which could only weaken all the parties.

It is not an exaggeration to say that divisions exhausted the left currents in Tunisia under the repressive blows of the regime and the attacks of the religious currents. Added to this is the bourgeois propaganda full of intellectual, moral and cultural commodities that are destructive to the aspirations of revolution, the liberation of our country and at the international level.

If this negative and painful reality was the result of objective and subjective conditions, so the fusion of the revolutionary left into a single party, as in an article by our comrades in the Unified Wadat Party (the synthesis of the Central Committee Plenum of January 26, 2015) becomes an inevitability that history will assure its achievement.

But we also say that the inevitable unity of the revolutionary left, of the Marxist-Leninists into a single party, instead of its fragmentation and division, is not an inevitability if left to chance. It will not happen without the preparation of the objective and subjective conditions, that is, without the development of the revolutionary struggle to the point that the tasks dictate unity to the forces in question.

This unification also cannot happen unless the revolutionaries realize, with a great deal of consciousness and will, the need to overcome their differences on solid and clear bases.

If we look at our reality today, we can say with some certainty that the two conditions have attained a rather important degree of maturity, since the conditions of the struggle to carry out the tasks of the revolution and to confront the currents of the counter-revolution impose urgently on the revolutionaries the need for self-criticism, the unification of their ranks as an indisputable condition to take up their responsibilities towards the revolution and the people.

Besides, a series of events and setbacks have taken place, the most important of which were the elections of October 23, 2011 and of October 26, 2014, which shook up the old convictions rooted in the sectarianism of the different left groups and forced them to see with a growing conviction and confidence that unity is one of the keys to win the future.

These general political developments contributed to alleviating the intensity of the quarrels of yesterday, though they still remain in some fields of common activity such as those of the youth and trade unions. Under the pressure of reality and consciousness, the relations are heading to increasing maturity. The creation of the Popular Front was both a response to this necessity and the embodiment of the conviction of the necessary unity. These are two mandatory conclusions dictated by the demands of the struggle, resulting from the revolution of December 17–January 14. Thanks to this experience, despite its deficiencies, and thanks to the gains of the unified struggle under the banner of the Popular Front, the intensity of old differences had decreased and in the best of cases it put those differences on the back burner in order to let the spirit of unity prevail, and to furnish the conditions for the success of the experience of unity, especially faced with the cruel conspiracy and hostile maneuvers of the enemies of the revolution.

The Popular Front, in the present conditions and those through which it passed, could not do more than what it did, because its unity was and still is a unity based on a tactical political agreement that did not and could not allow, under the weight of the pressing demands of the struggle, the evaluation of the nature of the unity around the strategic revolutionary task, that is, the nature of the revolution to come. A revolution against whom? In the interest of whom? Which popular classes does it rely on? What is the nature of the present stage that we are in and what is new one that we aspire for?

The set of concepts, such as the “democratic transition” and “revolutionary change” and other terms propagated by the media in Tunisia are terms steeped in confusion and generalizations. They proceed neither from a scientific study of objective reality and the contradictions to be resolved, nor from a precise knowledge of the tasks and the strategic and tactical objectives to be achieved. It is not an exaggeration to say that the slogan of the national democratic revolution which unites our common discourse (regardless of the former harsh quarrel about which task comes first, the national or the democratic one, which seems outdated now) needs more clarification and precision so that it can be the object of a deep, conscious unity.

We inherited from former years a sharp disagreement about the nature of Tunisian society and the current historical phase, as well as its social and economic characteristics. Today it is no longer

permissible to deal with these differences with the methods of the past. The differences should be resolved through frank and deep discussion and it is the cornerstone to shape the features of the revolution that we aspire for together under the banner of a united party. We believe that the resolution of this difference will facilitate the overcoming of the remaining secondary differences, and thus reach agreement on the tactics of the revolution in Tunisia.

There is another question of special importance in the experience of the Marxist left in Tunisia, with all its ramifications, as in the majority of other experiences; it is the question of organization which came from different organizational cultures, sometimes divergent in conception and in practice. This is accompanied by many disagreements and subjective conflicts, of which some continue in our ranks today, and which appear in struggles of the youth and trade unions.

It is not guaranteed that we can unite and ensure the permanence of this unity based on unity of references and programs, but only on general and implicit ideas in the field of organization. It is also certain that to postpone this question is a risk whose consequences could be perilous.

There is no doubt that the progress of this political and intellectual struggle will lead us to develop at a faster pace in laying the foundations of a united organization, even if some consequences of the past still persist; it would be easier to face the consequences inherited from the experience of the different small groups of the



Marxist left. The new common experience will have the responsibility to eliminate these obstacles and resolve the problems related to the evolution of our new experience, such as petty, isolated differences which emerge during the struggle, even within a single party.

We recognize that history places a great responsibility on us, that of unifying the ranks of the revolutionary Marxist-Leninists and beyond that of unifying the working class struggle. If we are going to face these innumerable difficulties in accomplishing this task, we must start with the valuable and important achievements that not only encourage us to carry on this experience, but also urge us to take it up without hesitation. There is no doubt that we do not take this task as an adventure, but we take it up with a conscious will and confidence in the victory, above all if we choose the path of honest, principled and deep intellectual struggle and constructive research and dialogue based on a scientific methodology. The method of work is of a great importance for our success. In this context, we think that it is necessary to create a centralized framework for organizing the debate, handling the intellectual struggle, formulating the conclusions, generalizing them and finally carrying out the practical plans that follow from this.

It is necessary to wage an intellectual and political struggle at the level of the common leadership. Such a debate will be generalized in a realistic and prudent way without haste or delay before spreading the discussion among the advanced cadres centrally and regionally, before creating discussion groups for the rank-and-file. The exchange of views and the written proposals will help more than any other means to highlight the agreements and limit the differences, which will help to control the disparities. The task of the united central structure will help to synthesize the result of the discussions and define the following steps to deepen the agreements and handle the differences in order to facilitate their resolution.

The period of common work under the banner of the Popular Front confirmed that a great deal of readiness and enthusiasm for unity within a big revolutionary party of the “left” will involve wide circles of rank-and-file members of the left parties. The chances of success are great and the willingness expressed up to now deserves taking us from the dream to its realization provided that the step forward is revolutionary, scientific and conscious.

April, 2018

Turkey

Party of Labour (EMEP) – Turkey

The Structuralist Class Analysis of Poulantzas – A Theoretical Critique

Nicos Poulantzas is one of the most prominent representatives of the post-Althusserian tradition. His political and theoretical line reflects the route of a school which can be characterized by anti-Marxism in the European left. This is the post-Marxist¹ school, represented most prominently by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, which rejects the connection between socialism and the working class as well as the influence of the relations of production on the political-ideological formations of society, and argues that it is in fact ideology and “discourse” which determines social groupings and movements. Almost all themes of this school exist as an embryo in Poulantzas. However, he never went as far as this school. He was not the first representative of post-Marxism but its final great harbinger.²

His unique structuralist class analysis is one of the subjects named after him. In the 1960s and 70s, with the spread of public services, prolongation of education, broadening of the service sector, and rapid implementation of micro-electronic and computer technologies in the production processes, new professions, especially in the “service” sector, emerged in employment, thus leading to various “middle class” theories. According to these theories, the Marxist approach to social classes should be updated in the light of new developments, and Marxism should be renewed from top to bottom with new criteria and contributions, at least in the field of class analysis. That Marx’s vision of society being divided and polarised into two main classes was both reductive and not material-

¹ The trend known as “*Post-Marxism*” is one of the examples of post-modern approaches, which negates the principal premises of Marxism and the structural objective relations of capitalism, rejecting social wholeness and replacing it with the idea that ideological and political discourse set the reality.

² Wood, Ellen Meiksins (1998) *The Retreat from Class: A New ‘True’ Socialism*, London-New York: Verso

ised; on the contrary, those sections which were considered to be in the category of ‘*middle class*’ such as the ‘*new petty bourgeoisie*’, ‘*new middle classes*’, ‘*professionals*’, ‘*information workers*’ were quite broadened. In this way, the Marxist approach to social classes on the basis of their objective positions in the relations of production and of exploitation was replaced by Weberian and structural-functional criteria such as their qualifications, the character of the product they produce, the sector they work in, their ideological position, etc. With social classes being determined by these elements, the conclusion was again a familiar liberal “*middle class*” society, but with a ‘left’ approach in the name of Marxism.

With capital export becoming more prominent in the monopoly stage of capitalism, and the transfer of work, especially the labour-intensive ones, to the countries where the labour force, lands and raw materials are cheaper, in search of maximum profit, there have been some changes in the composition of the working class in the imperialist and the advanced capitalist countries. This led to some theories suggesting that, especially in the imperialist metropolis countries, the working class has disappeared or been replaced by a class of “*information workers*” as a result of this transfer taking a new momentum in the 1990s and the 2000s following on the advances of the scientific and technological revolution during and after the Second World War.

Moreover, the fact that the working sections of society, including the petty bourgeoisie, had been subjected to an intensive exploitation as a result of the post-1980 wave of neoliberal attacks, the claims that class divisions had become blurred, the rise of social movements and the ideology advocating it, all have had degenerative effects in terms of understanding the class struggle and its bases. One of them was the new definition of the working class on the basis of a general criterion of impoverishment rather than the position in the relations of production, to include the small-sized land or property owning petty bourgeois sections. This new approach, sometimes referred to as “*precarial*”, considered some sections of society as a component of the “*social*” working class, such as small land-owning peasants, propertied tradesmen in hardship, self-employed independent craftsmen, professionals and women in unpaid domestic labour. Thus, the class definitions based on the contradictions with capital and on the relations of exploitation were replaced by a general category of the poor and oppressed. Also,

with this approach, all salaried people were considered to be part of the working class, irrespective of the share they take from surplus-value or their involvement in the militarist-bureaucratic apparatus, or as a high-level manager in the repressive administrative system.

Poulantzas' position, however, is different from this approach. He only considers unskilled factory workers as part of the working class, excluding service sector workers, office workers, salaried professionals and technicians, defining them as the *new petty bourgeoisie* due to their ideological and political positions. This approach of Poulantzas limits the working class to a mere 15-20 percent of the population in many imperialist, even medium sized, capitalist countries. In this way, in the 21st century, when we are going through one of the most intensified proletarianisation processes, capitalist societies will be defined as '*middle class*' societies.

In this article, drawing a line of demarcation with those approaches which broaden the working class to the whole of society without considering the relations of production and exploitation, we will mainly discuss Poulantzas' approach which marginalises the working class to a small minority in society, and will criticise it in the context of the present-day class struggles and their social basis.

Initially, Poulantzas adopted Sartre's existentialist theses. He built his doctorate on law, legality and legal system around these theses. Shortly after, he was introduced to Althusser and structuralism. His first book *Political Power and Social Classes* (1968), which gave him an international reputation, was shaped around the discussions in the process of preparation and publication of Althusser's and Balibar's book, *Reading Capital*. The defender of Sartre's theses was now studying society in structural instances (economics, politics and ideology).

Like most of his contemporaries, Poulantzas was initially more inclined to the Maoist alternative. His book was marked by the specificity and autonomy of the political phenomena and this was based on the critique of economism, which was the main characteristic of Maoism of that period. It was this emphasis of Maoism which interested scholars such as Althusser. Poulantzas felt a close connection with this concept, just as did many others who consid-

ered the Cultural Revolution³ as the main principle of the movements such as the 1968 insurgency. The main form the Cultural Revolution took in the West was based on the idea that social transformation would come about as a result of the spread of a cultural and ideological ‘*uprising*’ and struggle.⁴

The advocates of the Cultural Revolution in the West, while rightfully emphasising that there was no direct proportional link between economy and the cultural life of society, also severed the link between the relations of production and various manifestations of social life in the name of a critique of economism. Although he did not go that far, Poulantzas went along a similar route. Using an Althusserian set of concepts, he differentiated between the *decisive* level and the *dominant* level of social formation. While the *dominant* level could change in each social formation, the economic level would determine which level would be *dominant* in the *final instance*. However, **the dominant one was the political level.**

Thus the decisiveness of the relations of production and exploitation within social life was assigned to the *final instance*. The political phenomena were defined as *dominant*, and the link with the relations of production was weakened. For Poulantzas, “*monopoly capitalism is characterised by the displacement of dominance within the capitalist mode of production from the economic to the political, i.e. to the state.*”⁵

³ Mao Zedong, the leader of the People’s Republic of China and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, and his team launched a Cultural Revolution in 1966, which would go on for a decade, claiming to end the presence of “bureaucratic communism” in China. It required a war against all cultural and ideological elements which belonged to the “*past*”. Classical operatic and theatrical works were banned from cultural activities, only the “*revolutionary*” ones were allowed. Its manifestation in the West took the form of a critique of “*economic reductionism*” and the idea of the transformation of capitalism through an ideological and cultural uprising. The Chinese Cultural Revolution was in fact a reflection of the struggle between different political factions within the party and state.

⁴ Wood, *The Retreat from Class*

⁵ Poulantzas, Nicos (1975) *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, London: New Left Books, p. 101

It was stated that under monopoly capitalism *dominance* belonged not to the economic but to the political sphere, thus a critical step was taken to reverse the relationship between the two. By claiming that while the competitive stage was marked by the dominance of the economic, and monopoly capitalism by the political, the state, the *necessary* grounds were prepared for the conclusion that the relations of production and exploitation were not in fact decisive in practice.⁶

In his *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (1974) Poulantzas abandoned Maoism but still continued on the path he had taken earlier. In this book his primary aim was the critique of the French Communist Party's (PCF) doctrine of "*monopoly state capitalism*". Poulantzas believed that the PCF's doctrine had some faults because it considered the relation between the state and monopoly capital as a simple merger, thus regarding non-monopoly capital to be part of the "*popular*" forces and harbouring a strategy of anti-monopoly alliance.

However, with regard to questions such as the trivialisation of the antagonism between classes and replacing it with the contradiction between the "*power bloc*" and the "*popular alliances*", the transition to socialism through the "*transformation*" of the bourgeois state, and the neutralisation of the working class by reducing it to a small group, Poulantzas reconciled with Eurocommunism. His "*left Eurocommunism*" was distinguishable from the doctrine which had given rise to it to a significant degree. However, the common denominators were much more fundamental than the points of departure, and this led to important consequences concerning Marxist theory. As a logical outcome of his views, with his book *State, Power, Socialism* Poulantzas over time completed his transition from "*left Eurocommunism*" to Eurocommunism. For him, the state could be an important base of struggle as it was comprised of many clashes within and between classes. He adopted the path to transition to socialism through *democratisation* by influencing the state through popular struggles rather than attacking it from outside. This was a position close enough to classic Eurocommunism.⁷

⁶ Wood, *The Retreat from Class*, p. 31

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 33-34, 44

The approach cutting off social manifestations from the base of political economy and giving them an *autonomous* and gradually an independent role had shown its direct influence in Poulantzas' class analysis. The *dominance* of the political distanced the relations of production from their central position in social analysis. For him, it is not only the economic level but the political and ideological levels influence the determination of classes. For this reason, sometimes the *economic* and other times the *ideological* stance had *dominance* in differentiating classes. Thus, Poulantzas replaced the relations of exploitation with the ideological and political relations as a decisive element of classes. Although he still argued that the economic level was *decisive in the final instance*, this was just in words, and he placed the political-ideological division at the centre of his class analysis. With a more general perspective, one can say that the aim of providing a theoretical ground for the Eurocommunist “*popular alliance*” provided a significant motivation for Poulantzas' class analysis.

The Structuralist Influence

Drawing attention to his points of demarcation Poulantzas still wrote his main works under the influence of Althusser. One can say that the main motivation of Althusserism was to “*free Marxism from the Hegelian dialectics*” and “*anti-economism*”. Althusser wanted to establish a “*structuralist Marxism*” which was not historical, and which drove the subject from the theory.

Althusser replaces the subject with structures. For him, the structures themselves are made up of three levels, i.e. economic, political and ideological. Instead of considering one of these levels as central⁸, he argues that there are *dominant* and *determinant* levels



within the social formation. The *dominant level* could vary for each social formation, but it is the *determinant level* which determines the *dominant level*. The *determinant level* is the economic one and is a constant. One can talk about various contradictions stemming from these three levels; these contradictions may even influence one another; they may overlap, or even, on the contrary, there may be instances when they “intensify” and “change places”. These instances are determined by multiple factors, but even then the economic level is the determinant one ‘in the last instance’.

Inspired by such Althusserian themes and concepts, Poulantzas thinks that social classes are neither the subject of society nor the creator and transformer of social formations. For him, social formation has nothing to do with classes but is a *system of structures*. Classes are the manifestations of the *structure* within social relations. The real focal point of contradictions is on the ones between the *structures* and their *levels*. Classes are the reflection of these contradictions. However, they are not determined only at the economic level but in conjunction with the ideological and political levels. Thus, instead of a “*historical*” approach putting classes at the centre, Poulantzas sought for structuralist answers, giving the priority to the structure and considering classes as a product of the economic, political and ideological levels of the structure.

In his article *On Social Classes*, Poulantzas states that “*The economic place of the social agents has a principal role in determining social classes*”⁹ and goes on to say that it is not the only determinant: “*But from that we cannot conclude that this economic place is sufficient to determine social classes. Marxism states that the economic does indeed have the determinant role in a mode of production or a social formation; but the political and the ideological (the superstructure) also have an important role.*”¹⁰

Poulantzas in fact confuses the general emphasis on the importance of political and ideological relations with the particular question of how classes are determined. Emphasising that “*the economic place has a determining role*” in Marxism, Poulantzas is right to say that “*the political and the ideological (the superstructure) also have an important role.*” However, his style and method of using this general fact is wrong. Because the main topic of discussion is not

⁹ Poulantzas, Nicos, *On Social Classes*

¹⁰ *ibid.*

whether the classes are influenced by ideological and political relations, but which “*criteria*” and relations would be used to define the classes.

Considering that every social phenomenon is interlinked with one another, naturally no “*social thing*” is independent of political and ideological influences, just as they are not independent of economic processes. There is not only an external but also an internal relation between the social relations of production and the “*political*” and “*ideological levels*”. Ideology and politics are not referred to political organisations such as the state, political parties, etc. but they are within the production process itself and are also formed as part of this process. The fact that all social phenomena are influenced by various levels of the social process of production and reproduction does not negate the distinctness of these social phenomena, but nor does it necessitate the inclusion of all these levels in their **definition**.

This applies to social classes, too. However, the error of Poulantzas was not in his analysis that every phenomenon is influenced by the political and ideological determination, but in that his emphasis on political and ideological levels has made secondary the determinant role of the relations of production and exploitation in the formation of classes. Thus, he considered the formation of classes being under the influence of these three levels, but in fact went so far as defining it through political and ideological divisions.

The critical intervention of Poulantzas’ class analysis is that he moved the central position of production relations over to political and ideological relations. Although he took the “*economic level*” as a starting point, this would lose its prominence, as we will see further on, vis a vis the ideological divisions and become a secondary, even an ineffective issue.

The Class Scheme of Poulantzas

Let us begin to study Poulantzas’ class analysis from his starting point.

He begins with a very controversial thesis which needs proving: what distinguishes the working class from the petty bourgeoisie is mainly the division between productive and non-productive labour. The working class consists solely of the productive labour force, and the unproductive wage-workers are part of the *new petty bourgeoisie*.

“In the capitalist mode of production, productive labour is that which (always on the basis of use-value) produces exchange value in the form commodities, and so surplus value. It is precisely in **this way that the working class is economically defined in the capitalist mode of production**: productive labour relates directly to the division between classes in the relations of production.”¹¹

Limiting the working class to productive labour in this way is the first step in Poulantzas’ analysis. The second step is the inclusion of unproductive labour, which he defines outside the working class, in the “*new petty bourgeoisie*”, using the *ideological and political criteria*. Furthermore, productive labour is divided once again into manual and intellectual labour using the same criteria. “As a whole, engineers and technicians cannot be considered as belonging to the working class.”¹² Thus, intellectual labour is also defined as part of the *new petty bourgeoisie*.

Table 1: Operationalization of Poulantzas’ definition of the working class

Input Variables				
Unproductive labour	Mental labour	Sanction / supervision	Decision making	Interpretation
No	No	No	No	Workers in Poulantzas’ definition
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	New Petty Bourgeoisie

Source: Wright, Erik Olin, *Classes*, p. 157

Having described classes using both economic and political and ideological criteria, Poulantzas thus presents a three-dimensional class scheme. He believes that those who perform unproductive labour, because it does not take place in the production process but only has a role in the realization and re-distribution of surplus value (the “*economic criterion*”), cannot be considered among the working class. Moreover, although office work and the ever-increasing number of office workers taking part in management work are essentially involved in productive labour because of their coordinating

¹¹ *ibid.* Our emphasis.

¹² *ibid.*

and unifying roles in the production process, they cannot be considered as part of the working class because in the social division of labour, they undertake the role of reproducing the political relations between the two classes (the political criterion). Similarly, intellectual workers such as engineers and technicians are also excluded from the working class because they are the direct bearers of the ideological dominance of capital (the ideological criterion).

Marxist class analysis based on the relations of production and exploitation, and the “*economic criterion*” used by Poulantzas in his class analysis, are two completely different things. If there is to be an analysis based on the “*economic level*” as suggested by Poulantzas, given that classes are defined on a socio-economic basis, one should begin with the **relations of production based on exploitation**, not with the division between productive and unproductive labour. As Lenin states, social “*Classes are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated by law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organization of labour, and, consequently, by the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it.*”¹³

The “*economic level*” in Marxism refers to the **social relations of production and exploitation**, not divisions such as income, the level of technical qualification, market opportunities, the supervisory authority in the workplace or productive and unproductive labour. Thus, we see four aspects in Poulantzas’ class analysis that need to be discussed:

- the definition of the working class only by productive labour,
- the restriction of productive labour to only industrial labour,
- the definition of unproductive labour as *new petty bourgeoisie* and just on the basis of “*ideological*” level, and
- the exclusion of some sections of productive labour from the working class due to “*political and ideological divisions*”: division between manual and intellectual labour.

¹³ Lenin, V. I., “A Great Beginning”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, p. 421

Productive and unproductive labour

At the centre of the capitalist economy lies the uninterrupted production of surplus value and the process of accumulation on the basis of this surplus value being reconverted into capital. The aim of the process of accumulation is not only the reproduction of the value previously created but also the production of surplus value and its use in the service of capital accumulation. For capital to continue to grow, it needs to enter into an exchange, on the basis of certain social relations, with a certain type of labour which can produce surplus value.

The definition of productive labour is critical in terms of the **analysis of capitalist production**. For Marx, “*The difference between **productive and unproductive labour** is important with regard to accumulation, since one of the conditions for the reconversion of surplus value into capital is that the exchange should be with productive labour alone.*”¹⁴

In this framework, **when labour power is exchanged with capital used in the field of production** (when it is employed for capital), it is **productive** and in other cases it is not.

Poulantzas’ restriction of the working class to productive workers is based on the theory that surplus value is only produced in the manufacturing sector. Surplus value is produced as a result of the social relations of production between the worker and the capitalist. Whether the commodity which comes out of the production process is physical or not has no significance in terms of the productivity of labour. In his *Capital* and *Theories of Surplus Value* Marx criticises Adam Smith’s Scottish kind of materialist approach for linking the productivity of labour to a physical product, and explains at length, citing various examples, that the workers working for the capitalist in the production of services create surplus value.

In arguing that the production of services is not productive, Poulantzas aims to bring the definition of the working class up to date. However, he excludes a big section of the working class, maybe more than half, and categorises them as the **new petty bourgeoisie** because they work in the service sector and arguably do not produce any surplus value. This is a completely faulty analysis.

¹⁴ Marx, Karl, “Results of the Direct Production Process”, *Capital*, Vol.1, Chapter 6

Poulantzas has no concrete evidence when he limits the working class to productive manufacturing workers. More importantly, the division between productive and unproductive labour has no importance in terms of class differentiation. The main criterion defining the working class is the necessity of selling their labour power. Whether productive or not, both sections of the working class are deprived of the means of production and have to sell their labour power as a proletariat.

Using the differentiation of unproductive labour power in the determination of classes creates a *contradiction between the abstraction and the problem*. Poulantzas does not clarify why this differentiation should be accepted as an essential part of class divisions. He does not take into consideration the fact that, just like the “blue collar” working class, these groups are completely deprived of the means of production, that they too enable capital to obtain profit, create a labour surplus, and that they are also subjected to the extortions of capitalist accumulation (the “rationalisation” and division of labour, and discipline). He does not shed light on the question why social relations of production based on exploitation are replaced by the differentiation between productive and unproductive labour.

As a matter of fact, one can see in the later parts of his analysis that the “*economic*” level is not, as opposed to his initial claim, the determining factor in his exclusion of unproductive workers from the working class. This is because, even though Poulantzas was to begin coherently his analysis from the so-called “*economic*” level, he should have started with the **social relations of production based on exploitation**, and not from the differentiation of productive and unproductive labour, which is in itself important for other reasons.

On the other hand, although he seems to differentiate classes on the basis of “productivity”, Poulantzas, in fact, based his divisions on *political* and *ideological* ones when defining the petty bourgeoisie and excluding some sections of workers from the working class. This is a reflection of the idea of the *dominance* of the “*political-ideological*” level. This idea is found in the second stage of his class analysis but overrides his so-called “*economic*” level and shapes his whole analysis.

The “*service sector*” workers, who deserve to be taken into account because of their magnitude, with their skilled and unskilled

components, are an important part of the working class. Excluding this large section from the working class and arbitrarily defining it as “*petty bourgeoisie*” as Poulantzas does, would lead to the definition of the working class as a small minority in society, and the society we live in today as a petty bourgeois “*middle class*” society. However, even the evidence we can find under present day capitalism does not agree with such an assumption.

The Political Criteria

In his class analysis, Poulantzas wanted to revise the emphasis on the determinant role of the production relations with a “*structuralist Marxist*” perspective. Claiming to be fighting against economism, he defers this determinant role to the “*final instance*” and suggests that classes take shape under the influence of economic, political and ideological instances in their totality.

This approach is an extension of the Althusserian method which treats society as something mobile and consisting of instances which have equal influence.¹⁵ Althusser believes that the Hegelian concept of the “*whole*” is reduced to a single “*essential*” principle, and thus could not grasp the complexity of concrete determinations. Althusser argues that the Marxist concept is different from the Hegelian “*whole*”, and develops his theory of instances or levels: “*the unity of a structured whole containing what can be called levels or instances which are distinct and ‘relatively autonomous’, and co-exist within this complex structural unity, articulated with one another according to specific determinations, fixed in the last instance by the level or instance of the economy.*”¹⁶

In Althusser’s works the structures themselves consist of economic, political and ideological levels. Social phenomena, including “*class*”, emerge under the total influence of these levels. Under different circumstances one of these levels comes to the fore and becomes more influential as the “*dominant level*”. It is sometimes the

¹⁵ In his analysis of society with an Althusserian style of different and autonomous instances, Poulantzas brings in some conditions with regards to this analysis in his book *State, Power, Socialism*. See: Poulantzas, Nicos (1978) *State, Power, Socialism*, London: New Left Books, pp. 16-20

¹⁶ Althusser, Louis ve Balibar, Etienne (1970) *Reading Capital*, London: New Left Books, p. 97

ideological, sometimes the political or economic which is “*dominant*”. In the last instance it is the *economic level* which is decisive.¹⁷ The collective influence of the three different levels which together make up the structure conditions the emergence of classes.

This approach, explaining society with some distinct and “*relatively autonomous*” instances, has serious impasses. Etienne Balibar, known as the most important Althusserian theorist, is aware of this impasse. “*A plurality of instances must be an essential property of every social structure (but we shall regard their number, names and the terms which designate their articulation as subject to revision).*”¹⁸

One of the conclusions Poulantzas arrives at with his Althusserian theory of levels is this: “*The constitution of classes is not related to the economic level alone, but consists of an effect of the ensemble of the levels of a mode of production or of a social formation.*”¹⁹

With this approach, classes are reduced to “*an effect of*”²⁰ the mode of production (structure). They are not considered as a forming subject, and their existence is severed from real life,²¹ and are seen as passive “*influence*” of structures. Thus comes the conclusion that the history of class society is a process without a subject.²² For human beings to consider themselves as a subject is an illusion

¹⁷ Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes*, p. 69, London, NLB 1973

¹⁸ Althusser, L and Balibar, E, *Reading Capital*, p. 207

¹⁹ Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes*, p. 69

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 69

²¹ The critical point of the Althusserian “*structural casuality*” is “*the existence of its structure in its effects*”. “*...The structure, which is merely a specific combination of its peculiar elements, is nothing outside its effects.*” (Althusser and Balibar, *Reading Capital*, pp. 188-189)

²² “*History is a process without any subject or goal. Given situations in which people act as a subject under the determination of social relations are products of class struggle. In other words, history has no subject in the philosophical sense of the word, but it has a motor, and that is class struggle.*” (Althusser, Louis, *Reply to John Lewis*)

created materially by the ideological apparatus of the state. Classes are in fact just passive bearers of the structure.

Yet, this “*structure*” is a product of the fixation/structuralisation of the continuous relations between the classes. These structured relations enable the reproduction of class formations. Poulantzas fully differentiates the subject from the “*structure*” and assumes the individual and classes as ineffectual bearers. On the contrary, the relations formed among people as a necessity for the production of the products they need make up the relations of production. However, these necessary relations come to dominate the lives of people and thus classes. In this sense, production relations and classes, the components and producers of these relations, are not separate issues.

Pointing out three levels of structure, the Poulantzas’ analysis is motivated by his stance against “*economic reductionism*” which defines classes only with the “*economic level*”. Drawing attention to the influence of these three levels, Poulantzas states that “*From the moment that we speak of the structural existence of classes, political and ideological elements are present. This means those political and ideological elements are not to be identified simply with an autonomous political revolutionary organisation of the working class, or with a revolutionary ideology.*”²³

Poulantzas rightly argues that from the moment the existence of classes is mentioned “*there exist political and ideological elements*”. Be it apt for their class interests or not, the working class and its members have a political tendency. They have an ideological inclination created by their experiences or influenced by external conditions. Therefore, as far as the concrete existence of the working class is concerned, there inherently exist political and ideological relations in that “*entity*”, and Poulantzas is right on this subject.

Nevertheless, he jumbles two things together. The debate is not whether the working class is influenced by political and ideological relations (they also influence them) or produces these relations, which is a simple fact, but on how and at what level the existence of classes can be defined. Poulantzas included the ideological and political levels in his analysis to define classes rather than to study

²³ Poulantzas, Nicos, “The New Petty Bourgeoisie”, *The Poulantzas Reader*, ed. James Martin, p. 331

their concrete conditions. And at this stage the following questions come up:

- At what “*level*” or how are the classes defined?
- Can they be defined at the ideological and political level?
- What kind of a relation exists between the “*ideological and political level*” and Poulantzas’ statement that the “*economic level*” is determinate in the final instance?

* * *

For Poulantzas, the *political and ideological criteria* come to the fore especially in the analysis of petty bourgeoisie.²⁴ He explains how, in this framework, he includes politics and ideology in his analysis in dealing with unproductive labour power.

*“I have tried to show concretely what it means to say that the definition of social classes cannot be limited exclusively to the economic sphere, and that we must take into account politics and ideology. This has been a fundamental thesis advanced in **Political Power and Social Classes**. I want, therefore, to demonstrate why I needed those political and ideological elements. I needed them because even if the criterion of productive and unproductive labour is sufficient to exclude unproductive workers from the working class it is not adequate, because it is a negative criterion. (...) Further, it demonstrates that they are not part of the working class. But this economic criterion in itself is not sufficient to tell us to which class they belong.”*²⁵

According to this, the “*economic criterion*” in the form of “*productivity*” is a **negative** criterion which shows that unproductive labour does not belong to the working class. Then, if not the



working class, to which class do these sectors belong? What then, if “*productivity*”, which is claimed to be the “*economic criterion*” is not enough to determine the class they belong to?

At this point, the “*political and ideological criteria*” are included in the analysis. For Poulantzas, “*the economic (the relations of production and of exploitation) is not sufficient in order to define positively the class determination of unproductive salaried workers, and we must always take into account the political and ideological elements of the social division of labour.*”²⁶

“*Political criterion*” is significant in Poulantzas’ analysis, especially in determining the class position of managerial, supervisory and office labour in general. He believes that although those who work in the supervisory and managerial departments in the production of material commodities are subjected to exploitation just as manual workers, they take part in the **political dominance over the working class**. In other words, the supervisory workers are exploited by capital, but they also supervise the working class on behalf of capital.²⁷ For Poulantzas, supervisors’ principal function is

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 330

²⁷ Poulantzas tries to solve this contradiction by referring to the difference between the technical and social division of labour of the working class. However, he does not clearly define this difference between the two. The structural position of labour which is represented with the technical division of labour in general is determined especially by the technological level of production. The social division of labour, on the other hand, is based on the social organisation of production. Poulantzas believes that in the actual organisation of the labour process, social division of labour based on the relations of production has an effect on the technical division of labour. Thus, while the exploitation of supervisory workers by capital reflects the role of labour in the technical division of labour, their role in the political dominance over the working class is defined by their position in the social division of labour. However, these definitions of Poulantzas with regard to the technical and social division of labour are controversial, because he refers the technical division of labour to the exploitation of labour power by capital, and the social division of labour to political dominance. Yet social division of labour is based on the exploitation of labour power by capital. And Poulantzas reduces this exploitation to technical division of labour in order to include the political criterion in his analysis.

that of extracting surplus value from the workers,²⁸ and therefore, they belong to the “*new*” petty bourgeoisie.²⁹

For Poulantzas, the “*political criterion*” is the realisation of the managerial and supervisory functions in the capitalist process of production. Supervision in the capitalist enterprise is not only for the technical coordination of labour processes but also for the reinforcement of the political dominance over the working class.³⁰

It is open to discussion whether the “*political criterion*” of Poulantzas is really political. The main *political* criterion he focuses on is the position of the *new petty bourgeoisie* in the hierarchy of supervision.

Apart from technical coordination, supervision can be conceptualised in two ways. First, the capitalist class holding onto the instruments of power politically, and second, the managerial and supervision process of production as a whole. One cannot say that ordinary managerial personnel are part of the political supervision by the capitalist over the working class either way.

This is because top managers, who actually administer the capitalist ownership from outside the legal economic ownership, supervise the entire labour process separate from the immediate labour activity. As opposed to this, there is no reason to consider ordinary managerial personnel and foremen as an essential element of the function of political dominance.³¹ Moreover, they themselves are subject to the supervision and pressure by top managers who are part of the capitalist class.

The class position of the wage-labour power which practice managerial and supervisory functions was one of the principal topics of the debates on class analysis in the 1970s. The approach of Poulantzas is debatable because he excludes those workers who have some supervisory roles in the workplace from the working class and because he considers the “*political criterion*” as determinant despite the relations of production. In order to divide and monitor workers, some of them may be assigned to facile or real

²⁸ Wright, Eric Olin (1976) “Class Boundaries in Advanced Capitalist Societies”, *New Left Review*

²⁹ Carter, Bob (2014) *Capitalism, Class Conflict and the New Middle Class*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

³⁰ Burris, V. (1987) *Class Structure and Political Ideology*

³¹ Wright, Class Boundaries in Advanced Capitalist Societies

supervisory roles in the organisation of the labour process in the workplace. Especially for flexible work practices, it may be possible for workers to monitor each other through the object on the production belt. The claim that a low level of supervision function excludes someone from being a worker and makes him part of the “*new petty bourgeoisie*” may lead to the exclusion of workers who take part in the process of production from the working class (with the excuse that they have some supervisory roles). In many workplaces the foremen who supervise the workers have the same or a bit higher salaries. Yet, these workers are essentially subject to real supervision, just like the other workers, by high-level managers who have capitalist functions. However, some of these workers who have supervisory and managerial roles may belong, with respect to the concrete circumstances in the workplace, to the privileged/aristocratic layer within the working class.

In terms of managerial functions we need a broader analysis. In our age, managerial departments are broadened in the workplaces, office work becomes widespread, unskilled and Taylorized.³² The majority of people who work in these departments have no or only a very limited “*managerial role*”. Apart from the top managers in departments such as human resources, finance and bookkeeping, quality control, etc. the majority of people do work unrelated to management such as purchase and sale of commodities, marketing, relations with other departments and institutions. They have similar working conditions and salaries as workers and class interests opposed to the capitalists. For this reason, it would be a superficial approach to exclude them from the working class without taking into account the division of labour and stratification among the managerial personnel, as the majority of them work under the supervision of top managers and under capitalist domination.

However, for Poulantzas, any “*supervisory*” and “*managerial*” function is an element of the “*political criterion*”, and thus he rules out the difference between the supervisory function of top managers and that of lower level staff. Yet, top managers such as CEOs, directors-general, etc. usually own shares or have high enough salaries to get their share of the surplus value. They can transform their salaries into investments in property, shares, and other financial

³² Braverman, Harry (1998) *Labour and Monopoly Capitalism*, New York: Monthly Review Press

activities, bringing more income which may be bigger than their salaries. Yes, they may lose their job if they fail, but this does not mean that they have to sell their labour power as workers do. They can live from other income without having to work.

In other words, the criterion for the working class of having to sell their labour power is not valid for top managers. Not only do they get a share of the surplus value, but they have in practise the right to disposition of the means of production, the (non-legal) ownership in a way, even though legal ownership is also of importance and may lie somewhere else. Their behaviour, function, reflexes and interests cannot be separated from the capitalist who is the legal owner of the means of production. They have most of the benefits of ownership. For this reason, top managers should be considered not as a separate class, but as part of the capitalist class in terms of ownership of the means of production and the functions that go with it.

However, low-level managers and supervisors cannot be treated as such, and it is not right to exclude them from the working class through some “*political criteria*”.

The political criteria and unproductive unskilled workers

With “*political criteria*” Poulantzas focuses on managerial and supervisory labour in the capitalist organisation of production. He argues that such functions contribute to the political dominance of capital over the working class, and thus this kind of labour should be excluded from the working class as a whole. While the “*economic criterion*” defines the unproductive workers in a **negative**

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way and excludes them from the working class, the “*political criterion*” categorizes them with the “*new*” petty bourgeoisie. However, this approach of Poulantzas involves a great contradiction.

Because he limits unproductive labour to “*white collar*” workers and believes that they have managerial-supervisory functions, Poulantzas considers them to be participants in political dominance. However, a great majority of unproductive labour is made up of unskilled or semi-skilled workers who have no such functions.

For instance, the road workers employed by municipalities do not produce surplus value because the service they produce is not something bought or sold in the market. Therefore they are unproductive workers. They have no managerial or supervisory roles. Similarly, the workers who work in commerce and finance, in the circulation stage of capital and do not produce surplus value, have no function of political or ideological control. Again, the cashiers or shop assistants in shopping centres, shelf fillers in supermarkets, etc. are sectors of the working class with the lowest wages and harsh conditions. All these groups have no managerial or supervisory function of “*political dominance*”. Furthermore, such service sector jobs are being increasingly mechanised with the large use of computers and machines, thus workers have less control of their work.

Even when we look with Poulantzas’ method, millions of unproductive workers working on roads, cleaning, doing commercial work, public sector education, health, social security, etc. have no role in the establishment of “*political dominance*” over the working class.

Poulantzas emphasizes that the “*economic criterion*” can only determine that the unproductive labour is not part of the working class, but it does not determine which class it belongs to. Then, when the great majority of unproductive labour is placed outside the scope of Poulantzas’ “*political criterion*”, how could they be defined? This is one of the Poulantzas’ contradictions, i.e. not having the capacity to explain the class position of the great majority of unproductive workers who have no managerial or supervisory roles.

When we leave aside this approach of Poulantzas, excluding unproductive labour from the working class, what determines the class interests of the unproductive workers is the fact that they sell their labour power and are being exploited. The functions the workers undertake in the labour process may cause divisions among

workers. Sometimes these divisions are based on differences in responsibilities, education, income, etc. However, these differences cannot be seen as a class division in terms of a measure linked with the relations of production and exploitation.³³

The Ideological Criteria

According to Poulantzas, the working class is not only exploited economically and under political dominance but is also ideologically dominated. The source of ideological dominance is the separation of the knowledge of the process of production from the producers themselves, and it is characterized by the division between intellectual and manual labour. This is also a social division and cannot be reduced to “*intellectual*” and “*manual*” labour in a technical way. Those who use intellectual labour, such as engineers and technicians, may be part of the collective worker by taking direct part in the production of surplus value in the production process. However, for Poulantzas, they cannot be considered as part of the working class. In the social division of labour, they take a position as “*specialists*” and sever the link between the knowledge of production and the workers, thus they play a role in the formation of the ideological dominance over the working class.³⁴ Poulantzas argues that this division also reproduces the subordination of the working class by excluding them from the “secret knowledge” of the production process, thereby reinforcing their dependence upon capital.³⁵

For Poulantzas, professionals, technicians and other mental workers are the bearers of this relation of ideological domination and are therefore classified as part of the “*new*” petty bourgeoisie along with managers and supervisors. Before moving onto the form of using the “*ideological criterion*” it is necessary to touch upon his “*economic criterion*” regarding the intellectual workers in the production process.

Poulantzas acknowledges that mental workers are productive, even though he excludes them from the working class and includes them in the “*new*” petty bourgeoisie. In other words, according to Poulantzas’ “*economic criterion*”, engineers and technicians are to

³³ Wood, *Retreat from Class*

³⁴ Carter, *Capitalism, Class Conflict and the New Middle Class*

³⁵ Burris, *Class Structure and Political Ideology*

be defined in the working class. However, at this point his “*structural determinant*” enters the stage, the “*economic criterion*” is left aside, and the “*ideological criterion*” is defined arbitrarily as the **dominant** one. The “*ideological criterion*” suppresses the “*economic criterion*” which he defines as determinant, thus productive intellectual workers get excluded from the working class and included in the “*new*” petty bourgeoisie.

Let us now look closely at the way Poulantzas presents the division between intellectual and manual labour, which he defines in terms of their social functions.

*“That division, which has a role in determining positions in the social division of labour, is by no means limited to the economic domain. (...) The division between manual and intellectual labour can be grasped only when it is extended to the **political and ideological relations** of (a) the social division of labour within enterprises, where authority and direction of labour are linked to intellectual labour and the secrecy of knowledge, and (b) the ensemble of the social division of labour—relations which contribute to defining the positions occupied by the social classes.”*³⁶

Poulantzas draws attention to two subjects in the division of manual and intellectual labour: first, the political and ideological relations in an enterprise, and second, the political and ideological relations in the social field. The “*ideological*” and “*political*” relations in the enterprise are defined in connection with the functions of technicians and engineers because they use “*intellectual labour*” and have the “*secret knowledge*” in production.

For Poulantzas, engineers and technicians in an enterprise “*are entrusted with a special authority in overseeing the labour process and its despotic organization*”.³⁷ Thus, he places them ‘*alongside*’ intellectual labour in terms of their maintenance of the monopoly of knowledge. Therefore, “*as a whole, engineers and technicians cannot be considered to belong to the working class*”.³⁸

As the division between productive and unproductive labour is not sufficient to exclude technicians and engineers from the working class, Poulantzas resorts to the “*ideological criterion*”. He argues that those who use intellectual labour are excluded from the

³⁶ Poulantzas, “On Social Classes”

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ *ibid.*

working class not because of the nature of intellectual labour but due to its ideological and political function. Here, two functions which Poulantzas draws attention to come to the fore: first, the supervision of the labour process in the workplace (the political function), and second, the monopoly of knowledge of the labour process in the workplace (the ideological function).³⁹

The position of technicians and engineers in the production process is one of the critical topics of debate in class analysis. Because engineering and technical work is not a class concept but a professional category, their members can belong to different classes. But the “*ideological and political criteria*” put forward by Poulantzas with regard to technicians and engineers in the production process are far from solving the problem.

It is not the use of intellectual or manual labour which determines whether the worker in the production process is part of the working class or not. In the labour process manual and mental labour collectively take part in the production of surplus value. Moreover, the work done by manual labour involves some intellectual aspects, and vice versa. Also, in some fields, intellectual labour may involve more tiring and heavy working conditions than manual labour. Call centre workers, for instance, do routine and very repetitive work which cannot be classified as manual, but it cannot be defined as “*skilled*” or “*positive*” work either.

Despite this, the division between manual and intellectual labour still continues. But it is not a class criterion. If it were so, it would be impossible to measure in many groups of work to what extent it was intellectual, to what extent manual.

And beyond all this, an engineer who is deprived of the ownership of the means of production, who is employed for a certain salary under the dominance of capital, is part of the collective worker under commodity production. If we leave aside those engineers who perform the functions of capital in top managerial positions independent of the production process, those engineers who participate in the production process with their intellectual and manual labour are part of the working class. However, they are a special stratum within the working class because of their different characteristics from the unskilled sections of the working class and their professional knowledge.

³⁹ *ibid.*

Table 2: The criteria in Poulantzas’ class analysis

	ECONOMIC CRITERIA			POLITICAL CRITERIA		IDEOLOGICAL CRITERIA	
	<i>Exploiter</i> Appropriates Surplus- Value	<i>Exploited*</i> Surplus Labour Extorted	Surplus- Value Extorted	<i>Domination</i>	<i>Subordination</i>	<i>Domination</i>	<i>Subordination</i>
<i>Bourgeoisie</i>	+	-	-	+	-	+	-
<i>Proletariat</i>	-	+	+	-	+	-	+
<i>New petty bourgeoisie</i>	-	+	-/+	+/-	+	+/-	+
<i>Old petty bourgeoisie</i>	-	-	-	-	+	+	+

+ criterion present +/- criterion usually present, but sometimes absent
 - criterion absent -/+ criterion usually absent, but sometimes present

Source: Wright, *Class Boundaries in Advanced Capitalist Societies*, p. 14

The Ideological Criterion and Unskilled Intellectual Workers

It is a problematic approach to consider the knowledge of production as a form of “*ideological dominance*” over the working class, and to place those who have this knowledge in an antagonistic relation with the working class. The approach of Poulantzas, who defines the division between manual and intellectual labour with the “*ideological criterion*” of “*knowledge monopoly*” is not able to explain the position of the intellectual workers who do not have this monopoly. For instance, the “*ideological criterion*” and “*ideological dominance*” become dysfunctional in the definition of the intellectual workers who do simple office work and financial calculations, neither performing any physical activity nor having any “*knowledge monopoly*” but are involved in unskilled mental labour.

As Braverman shows, in many offices and commercial companies labour processes are rationalised and mechanised, and are subject to a despotic supervision just as in industry.⁴⁰ The fact that routine mental workers participate in certain “rituals” and “cultural practices” which symbolize their ideological distance from manual workers does not demonstrate their domination over those workers.⁴¹

Table 2 demonstrates this contradiction more clearly. Let us take an “*intellectual*” worker, a computer programmer for instance, whom Poulantzas categorizes as a constituent of the “*new*” petty

⁴⁰ Braverman, *Labour and Monopoly Capitalism*

⁴¹ Burris, *Class Structure and Political Ideology*, p. 14

bourgeoisie. In the table there are two options in the field of surplus value production: this intellectual worker is a member of the collective worker who takes part in the production of surplus value, just like Poulantzas' working class. There are also two options in terms of political dominance; and the computer programmer cannot possibly apply political or ideological dominance, just like Poulantzas' working class. As seen in the table, Poulantzas admits the existence of workers, under the category of the "new" petty bourgeoisie, who cannot apply such forms of dominance. In that case, the computer programmer has similar characteristics to those of the worker in the table. Despite this, Poulantzas argues that they belong not to the working class but to the "new" petty bourgeoisie. Even Poulantzas' approach necessitates the inclusion of at least some sectors of those workers whom he classifies as "new" petty bourgeoisie in the working class. But Poulantzas does not admit this.

The New Petty Bourgeoisie

Poulantzas includes in the "new" petty bourgeoisie those productive and unproductive labourers whom he thinks play a role in the reproduction of capitalist relations through administrative/managerial, technical and ideological dominance over the production process and the workers. The reason for this inclusion is not whether they are productive or not (the "economic level" for Poulantzas) but because of their ideological and political function. Thus, the ideological and political criteria overtake the economic criterion and become determinant in deciding to which class the unproductive workers belong.

Poulantzas believes that the petty bourgeoisie is comprised of two main groups: The first one is the "traditional" petty bourgeoisie "which tend to decline in size".⁴² These are the small-scale producers and small traders. They include small land-owning peasants, shopkeepers in the city or country, small merchants, etc. Here, there is no economic exploitation in the strict sense, inasmuch as these forms do not employ paid workers. Labour is principally provided by the real owner or the members of his family.⁴³

The second group of petty bourgeoisie is "the 'new' petty bourgeoisie, which tends to increase under monopoly capitalism. It con-

⁴² Poulantzas, *On Social Classes*, p. 37

⁴³ *ibid.*

sists of the **non-productive wage-earning workers** mentioned above; we should add to it civil servants employed by the state and its various apparatuses. These workers do not produce surplus value. Like others, they sell their labour-power and their wage is determined by the price of reproducing their labour-power, but they are exploited by the direct extortion of surplus labour, not by the production of surplus value.”⁴⁴

In Poulantzas, the “old” and the “new” groups of petty bourgeoisie occupy different positions in the production process. While the former is involved in small-scale commodity production with the means of production that they have, the latter work for the capitalist in return for a salary, thus their labour time is appropriated by capital. Because this difference in the relations of production and the “economic level” cannot be overlooked, Poulantzas rightly poses the following question: “Can they then be considered to constitute a class, **the petty bourgeoisie?**”⁴⁵ The way out of this contradictory situation is, for Poulantzas, the intervention of the “political and ideological” criteria:

“It can be held that these different positions in production and the economic sphere do, in fact, have the **same effects** at the political and ideological level. Both small holders and those wage earners who live out their exploitation in the form of ‘wages’ and ‘competition’ far removed from production present the same political and ideological characteristics for different economic reasons.”⁴⁶

That there are two large social groups having the same political and ideological characteristics and world view is a very serious and ambitious statement. And arguably the same “political and ideological characteristics” are as follows:

“Petty bourgeois individualism; attraction to the **status quo** and fear of revolution; the myth of ‘social advancement’ and aspirations to bourgeois status; belief in the ‘neutral State’ above classes; political instability and a tendency to support ‘strong States’ and Bonapartist regimes; revolts taking the form of ‘petty bourgeois’ jacqueries. If this is correct, then these common ideological-political characteristics provide sufficient ground for considering

⁴⁴ *ibid.*

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

that these two ensembles with different places in the economy constitute a relatively unified class, the petty bourgeoisie."⁴⁷

Despite having very different positions in production and economically, the property-owning “old” petty bourgeoisie and the unproductive workers are categorized in the same class (the petty bourgeoisie) because of the arguably “ideological” similarities claimed by Poulantzas. They have different positions in **production relations**, but the same one in **ideological relations**!

This analysis has two major problems: First, the theory of the ideological similarities between unproductive workers and small property-owning working people are at best based on subjective observations; in other words, they are arbitrary. And second, the ideological relations, and not production relations, have the dominant position in determining the classes, and two large groups with different production relations are defined as a single class, arguably, due to ideological similarities.

From the Economic Criterion to the Determinant Effect of Ideology

In Poulantzas’ model, the “*political and ideological criteria*” superseding the “*economic criterion*” make his argument that economic relations have priority over political and ideological relations problematic. Mental workers and technicians sharing the same economic practises of productive labour with the workers are excluded from the working class because of the “*political and ideological criteria*”. Yet, on the other hand, the *traditional* and *new* petty bourgeoisie having different economic positions are classified as parts of the same class on the basis of “*common ideological influences*”.

This unity that Poulantzas refers to between the traditional and “new” petty bourgeoisie is especially problematic, because the economic positions these classes occupy are not just different but objectively opposite. The concentration and centralisation of the capitalist enterprise, giving rise to the emergence of new production technologies and sectors pose an existential threat to small commercial production which is vital for the traditional petty bourgeoisie. Considering their contradicting economic interests, the claim that these groups unite in a single class around common ideological ten-

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

dencies is in contradiction with principal Marxist premise which gives priority to economic relations in determining classes, which Poulantzas also accepts.⁴⁸

When ideology and politics enter the stage as a criterion for classes, then it is possible to increase the number of classes in accordance with ideological differences. And this leads to social classes being determined in an arbitrary way on the basis of ideological differences. Poulantzas refrains from drawing logical conclusions from his analysis and thus unifies almost 70 per cent of society in the petty bourgeoisie, assuming they have a common ideological and political denominator.

On the other hand, the ideological divisions among workers are meaningful not for their own class interests but for capital. The imposition of capitalist ideology can have a destructive function in terms of working class unity and raise the barriers to class organisation, but this cannot be seen as a dividing class barrier between the productive and unproductive sectors of the working class.

Poulantzas took a critical step towards post-Marxism, which severed all connections between politics-ideology and the economic base of classes, when he considered the “*ideological-political criteria*” as a central element in determining classes instead of the relations of production. The post-Marxists who marched on the path Poulantzas had opened argued that social classes are groups which are established independently of the economic base and with use of ideological and political discourse.⁴⁹ Although Poulantzas did not go that far, he opened the path to post-Marxism and post-modernism by replacing objective class structures with ideological and political elements, and set the route.

March 2018

⁴⁸ Burris, *Class Structure and Political Ideology*, pp. 11-12

⁴⁹ Laclau, Ernesto and Mouffe, Chantal (1992), *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Verso, 2001 , p. 85

Venezuela

Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of Venezuela – PCMLV

The Venezuelan People Are Resisting and Fighting

For some time now, the Venezuelan revolutionary process has been going through a bourgeois democratic stage that, in its process of decomposition and internal contradictions, is leading the people to moments of resistance and struggle to take up their own destiny. Based on the premise of the right of peoples to their self-determination, it is going through a course that can open the possibility to promoting national liberation and socialism, taking as a reference point the history of resistance to European invasion and colonization, as well as the wars of independence and the attempts to build a revolutionary option, on the part of the peoples oppressed by imperialism during the 20th century and so far in the 21st century.

In this struggle, which is increasingly taking on the character of anti-imperialist resistance, different ideological currents within the revolutionary forces are meeting and confronting each other. Some bourgeois forces, who are seeking answers to the problems on the basis of a “humanist socialism,” “democratization of capital,” praising their gods, heroes or spokespersons, are awaiting solutions based on miracles and fate. This ignores the scientific reality of political economy and claims to cure the ills of a dependent society with poultices and demagogy. Others of us are materialists who see the transformation of society on the basis of social relations of production and the role of the masses who produce their own leaders, based on science, action and work, telling the truth to the masses to seek the solution in their own strength. Although there is a central irresolvable contradiction in this aspect, they maintain certain agreements based on the understanding of the stage of struggle that we are in and the characterization of the main enemy.

We can say that the Venezuelan revolutionary process, which began with the introduction of socialist ideas at the beginning of the 20th century, has advanced from the predominance of anti-

dictatorial and anti-Gomecist¹ democratic positions towards advanced positions of rupture with imperialism and the struggle for socialism. Today they have as their basic conception the eclectic and petty bourgeois approach of the so-called 21st century socialism that, due to its class character, does not take up the real struggle against imperialism, nor the class struggle. Instead, it encourages the fight against the “empire,” understood as the oppression by the US and against the traditional bourgeoisie, not against the entire bourgeoisie. Many of the “Bolivarian” leaders are trying to transform themselves into an emerging bourgeoisie associated with the monopolies of China and Russia.

This ideological limitation does not prevent agreement on the struggle against Yankee imperialism as the main enemy, but there is also a contradiction in relation to the role of the imperialist powers of the China-Russia Bloc in general and with the emerging bourgeoisie that aspires to lead Venezuelan society in particular. For that reason, there is a permanent ideological struggle between the reformist ideas and the consistent ones of Marxism-Leninism.

This struggle between the two tendencies, one reformist and the other revolutionary, within the process sustains the ideological debate in which we are immersed, nourishing the daily confrontation against the main enemy. This has been giving way to the generalization of an anti-Yankee consciousness among the popular majorities, driven by both tendencies, thus fulfilling some of the objectives expressed by our party since its foundation 10 years ago.”This difficult equation poses a challenge for the Marxist-Leninists: to build the Party under the specific conditions of Venezuela, to develop its theoretical positions, to arm itself with a clear strategy and develop the appropriate tactics, defending popular and democratic demands, at the same time as it consolidates the organization of the working class...”²

¹ Juan Vicente Gomez: Dictator who ruled the destinies of Venezuela between 1910 -1935.

² “With the emergence of the PCMLV, Marxism-Leninism advances in Venezuela.” *Unidad y Lucha (Unity and Struggle)* No. 17, October 2008, p. 116.

The reality of Venezuela

The complex situation that exists today in Venezuela could be defined as popular resistance and struggle against the offensive of the US-EU imperialist bloc, characterized economically by stagnation of the productive apparatus, decrease in existing capacity, hyperinflation, low wages, high prices of commodities, speculation and hoarding, collapse of public services, smuggling of extracted resources, devaluation of the workforce and high profits of monopoly groups, concentration and centralization of capital, which may allow us to conclude that it is a dependent capitalist economy in decomposition, under pressure and influence from multiple external and internal agents over which the government has lost control. We can summarize that all this is the result of the confluence of 4 elements: 1) The impact of the capitalist crisis, 2) The offensive of the US-EU imperialist bloc with its blockade, 3) The errors of government in the management of the economy, 4) The weakness of the proletarian vanguard in leading the masses at this time.

We will explain each of the causal elements of the political situation that exists in Venezuela.

1. The impact of the capitalist crisis:

As Venezuela is a dependent capitalist country, its economy is subjected to the international division of labor. It is a particular cog in the imperialist gear; it is negatively or positively impacted by what is taking place in the economy of the imperialist powers. That is why it is affected by the general crisis of capitalism, the economic crisis of 2008, the oil crisis of overproduction by fracking, in addition to its own distortions with its approach of building a so-called “post-capitalist model.” This leads to the interaction of many factors that are not found in other dependent capitalist economies, such as the high level of state intervention and sharp political confrontations.

All this is aggravated by the pressures of a struggle between imperialist blocs that want to consolidate their control while maintaining the level of dependence; therefore it is not easy to define exactly, in a pure state, the economic phenomena in process, as they are characteristic of the economic crisis and depression quantitatively and qualitatively.

As this is a moment of transition between economic crisis and depression, with a notable influence of external and internal agents, the Venezuelan economy has very particular characteristics and profound weak points that are bringing it closer to a turning point.

The economic crisis that emerged in the US in 2008 has had a significant impact throughout the world; all continents, countries and branches of the economy were affected, some in the beginning and others later as a consequence mainly of unequal development and the actions of the imperialist countries in pushing the impact on their economy onto their periphery. This caused subsequent waves that are still reverberating in many countries, including Venezuela.

At the same time, there has been an oil crisis, mainly due to the implementation of a technology that allowed the possibility of exploiting new deposits in countries that had seemed to have reached their peak in oil production and that now still have capacity to supply themselves and export crude oil, as is the case with the US. This has created, in addition to a change in world reality, a relative overproduction of crude oil that brought prices down. Due to an overconfidence in the recovery of high prices, the product of an idealist analysis of the problem, and due to the shortage of spare parts and supplies that have paralyzed productive regions, the Venezuelan oil industry has been in decline, its production going from about 3 million barrels per day to less than 1.5 million. This has undoubtedly made a dent in the entire economy, which has been sustained by oil income for decades.

2. The US-EU imperialist bloc's offensive with its blockade

Every day the actions of the US-EU imperialist bloc have a clearer characteristic of a blockade; economic, military, diplomatic and informational, which in spite of the errors of the Venezuelan government in the handling of its foreign policy can create the solidarity of the peoples of the world with a population under attack.

This siege against the people of Venezuela is advancing on all fronts and is becoming a sustained, total blockade; the attempt at international isolation fostered by the governments of the US and the main European powers is striving for the collapse of the country and the unconditional surrender of its people, who, regardless of the current government, have decided to follow a path of rupture with that oppressor bloc.

The struggle for the redivision of territories and markets among the imperialist powers is sharpening and is clearly seen in Venezuela with the emergence of powers such as China and Russia, which are demanding to play a more active role on the earth's map. During this sharpening of the general crisis of capitalism all the countries are playing a role, some in maintaining the status quo, others in the search of its rupture. There is a temporary coinciding among those who have Yankee imperialism as their main enemy. Starting from this assessment, the anti-imperialist struggle has various aspects: From the struggle of the emerging bourgeoisie that only wants to change partners and now to establish its economic and military center to guarantee its business dealings with the China-Russia bloc, without modifying the conditions of dependence and the role of the country. They are really not anti-imperialist but anti-US-EU. There are those of us who are fighting against imperialism, understood as the highest phase of capitalism, which must be confronted to open the way to socialism and the formation of new relations of production, that is, the struggle against all the imperialists and in general against capitalism. There are also those who, full of good intentions, propose to fight for national independence, but who do not consider changing the system of production; idealistically; they believe in the possibility of an independent capitalist development, and include many patriots and nationalists.



Banner reads: Worker Control

In the particular case of Venezuela, without a doubt, we consider that the main enemy is Yankee imperialism, which due to its high degree of danger must be confronted with the greatest possible strength. Therefore agreements must be made with all the forces willing to confront this enemy, without losing our specific viewpoint, while continuing to raise our slogans and express our strategic objectives.

In this regard, we consider, based on Lenin's ideas of the features that define imperialism, and on the whole Marxist-Leninist theory on this subject, that China and Russia are emerging imperialist powers whose character and role should be denounced, but they are not for now the main enemy.

In the same way, we consider that, despite its weaknesses and errors, the government of Nicolas Maduro cannot at the moment be the main objective of our attacks. As long as it remains in the current of resistance against Yankee imperialism and allows the revolutionary organizations to carry out their activity, we consider it appropriate to emphasize the accumulation of force to confront the main enemy, while being vigilant not to fall into the clutches of the other imperialist powers and while fighting for popular participation to the highest degree possible, advancing the building of the party.

Venezuela is experiencing a very special moment in its history, in which the people have shown significant anti-Yankee consciousness by resisting under difficult material conditions without going over to the right; even rank-and-file members of the right reject the aggression of the US and are opposed to the attitude of their own leaders of selling out the sovereignty of their country.

For decades the US-EU imperialists have been making efforts to regain full control of the country. This has been impossible for them through the electoral process and until now it has been made difficult to do by force. This does not mean that they have stopped making efforts to achieve their objective and that some of the options of force can be ruled out, such as invasion, coup or negotiation in order to create the conditions to retake control.

It is increasingly evident that the blockade is ongoing, deepening and has several aspects:

The economic blockade that is seen in the financial and commercial aspect, in the first place, blocking the accounts of the country, it is sanctioning the holders of accounts, access to credit is limited and the low value of the Venezuelan debt is being promoted.

This is depreciating the national currency to never before seen levels. Commercially, principally through the differential in foreign exchange rates, the flight of all types of commodities toward the frontiers is being promoted, access to goods at an international level is being blocked, including raw materials, supplies and spare parts, affecting imports and obstructing national production. The smuggling of extracted resources is promoted; all these elements that strike the economy in an unstoppable way are leading to collapse.

The military blockade is clearly seen in the positioning of a NATO ring around our country, as an instrument of aggression by the US-EU imperialist bloc. It is stationed at the four cardinal points in order to close off all access by air, land and sea and with a well-defined choke point along the border with Colombia. It is not surprising that the Santos government has reached agreements with NATO; it has expanded the US military bases on its territory and is seeking agreements with the insurgency. All this has the firm intention of clearing the way for a direct military intervention using any excuse to begin the aggression.

The diplomatic and political blockade is also advancing, deepening the process of weakening Maduro's government, especially as the countries of that same bloc and its regional spearhead grouped in the so-called "Lima Group" are refusing to recognize the Constituent National Assembly (ANC) and consequently all the laws passed by it that continue in effect in the country. The interventionist bloc has been charged with replacing Maduro with a parallel



Sign reads: Hacienda los Aranguéz,
We Workers Demand Expropriation

government in exile, with a Supreme Tribunal of Justice (TSJ) that meets at the OAS headquarters, formed by Judges appointed by the National Assembly supported by this bloc, an Attorney General of the Republic who was dismissed by the ANC and who has filed a complaint against the president before the TSJ in exile. The legislative power resulting from the 2015 elections has its members working directly from the US State Department, although it is not recognized in Venezuela.

It is clear that the international imperialist aggression aims to leave the Maduro government without legitimacy and to put in place a government tailored to the US-EU imperialist bloc in Venezuela, until presidential elections are held in December 2018 or earlier. This was made difficult because the constitutional president of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Mr. Nicolas Maduro Moros, was chosen in elections endorsed and recognized by them.

The holding of early presidential elections agreed to by the ANC, which is not recognized by the US-EU imperialist bloc, would mean for it and its lackeys a firm step in the loss of the legitimacy of the executive, and therefore the possibility that the sham powers set up in exile by them would appoint an interim president to “fill the void, bring back democracy, finish the mandate and call for free elections.”

For all these reasons we must understand that the people of Venezuela are under a high-level aggression, that a violent attack by the US-EU imperialist bloc is approaching, that the high level of consciousness of the people and their elements of the proletarian vanguard are what has allowed them to resist up to now. They have done this even many times against a vacillating government, riddled with errors: mainly because of its high petty-bourgeois composition, but which has been forced to resist because the right does not want to negotiate and they do not want to lose their privileges and benefits obtained under their administration, much less to end up like Noriega, in a US jail.

There are some patriotic elements in the government and military forces, including a sector of the opposition that at this point is opposed to direct intervention by imperialism, elements that are becoming increasingly important and it is necessary to understand them in order not to fall into strategic errors that can isolate and put at risk the victory of the aims of the proletariat.

3. The errors of the government in the management of the economy:

The bourgeois and petty-bourgeois composition of the government's leadership, its lack of understanding of the laws of capitalism and of the experiences in the processes of contradiction with imperialism, as well as the mishmash of conceptions and the permanent changes in the management of the economy, have led to a series of errors, such as not developing agriculture and industrial production. This makes the economic situation more complex every day, because the effect of measures of the blockade and the government errors are leading to the collapse of the industrial apparatus, public services and agricultural production. Medicines, food and spare parts will become even scarcer because progressively and inexorably we are entering into a spiral of war with its consequences.

The catastrophe that some of us said would occur is looming, but it can also lead to the popular majorities, in confronting the main enemy that is undoubtedly Yankee imperialism, raising their level of consciousness even further and making the program of the Marxist-Leninists their own in order to confront the aggression with all the measures of force that the war of resistance demands, creating a revolutionary situation.

It is already inevitable that the people of Venezuela will make their share of sacrifice; we must make every effort so that this painful transit will be in pursuit of the building of a new society and not as sheep to the slaughter behind petty bourgeois dreams, as happened in other countries of the region and the world.

4. The weakness of the proletarian vanguard to lead the masses at this moment:

The popular and proletarian parties, including our own, do not have enough strength at the moment to put ourselves at the head of the struggle. This does not mean that we should not work so that at some point we can assume the leadership. Therefore we must strive intensely to avoid leaving the masses under the ideological and political influence of reaction and reformism, which would lead them to harbor illusions that they can resolve the situation within the framework of bourgeois politics.

Every day more and more social sectors are conscious of the need to fight together to confront the main enemy. This does not

mean that we will immediately overcome the lack of unity among the left, since the initiatives of the popular movement are not yet consolidated, but the initiatives of the Popular Front are advancing progressively “to prepare the conditions to support the democratic achievements of the Bolivarian process and at the same time to build the bases to advance towards socialism and communism. This shows the necessity of the unification of the genuine Marxist-Leninist currents under a single program, unmasking the reformists and revisionists, the traitors to Marxism-Leninism of new and old types.”³

Possible Scenarios in the Short and Medium Term

The scenarios that can be foreseen in the medium term are marked by the need to resist and the possibility of revolutionary advance: 1. Deepening of the blockade, 2. A revolutionary situation, 3. Negotiations of the Nicaragua type, 4. Coup d'état, 5. Invasion.

1. Deepening of the Blockade

The blockade in all its forms continues to deepen. In the economic arena we see the statement of the president of the US in relation to the Petro [a currency launched by the Venezuelan government based on its oil and mineral reserves – *translator's note*] and the blockade's continuation in other commercial areas, as well as the investigations and sanctions against high officials of the government in order to obstruct the issuance of documents by the Republic. In the military arena, NATO and especially its partners Brazil, Colombia and Guyana are preparing actions as the continuation of regional strategic movements; after the presidential elections the situation will become more complex because US-EU imperialist bloc is preparing to not recognize the government.

2. A revolutionary situation

The worsening of the economic situation is clearly leading to the objective worsening of the living conditions of the working class and the popular majorities, but the subjective conditions, mainly the understanding of the leading role of the working class, is not yet understood. It is clear that, as Lenin stated, the symptoms of a revolutionary situation are developing: “(1) when it is impossible

³ Ibid.

for the ruling classes to maintain their rule without any change;... it is usually insufficient for ‘the lower classes not to want’ to live in the old way; it is also necessary that ‘the upper classes should be unable’ to live in the old way; (2) when the suffering and want of the oppressed classes have grown more acute than usual; (3) when, as a consequence of the above causes, there is a considerable increase in the activity of the masses, who uncomplainingly allow themselves to be robbed in ‘peace time’ ...”⁴ We consider that all the conditions of a revolutionary situation can develop in the medium term.

3. Negotiations of the Nicaragua type

A sector with substantial weight within the government is raising the possibility of taking a step backward through negotiations with representatives of Yankee imperialism, hoping to hand over the government, maintain some important political spaces, their wealth, privileges and come back at another time. Henry Falcon seems to be the center of this policy, having made public a possible appointment of Minister Padrino Lopez as Minister of his hypothetical government (remember the case of Humberto Ortega in Nicaragua).

4. Military coup d’état

The impact of the political crisis penetrates every sector of society; this includes the military establishment where there are bourgeois and proletarians, patriots, democrats, revolutionaries as well as sell-outs, traitors and counter-revolutionaries. The impact of the situation can be seen every day in declarations, actions, arrests of high officials who intend to carry out a military coup d’état. Even the Minister of Defense has spoken out and rejected the possibility of “taking sides” and the path of civil war.

5. Direct Foreign Invasion

The direct invasion of NATO military forces in Venezuela is not considered most likely in the coming months, but the movements are clear of its lackeys from Colombia, Brazil, Guyana as well as Peru, Chile, Mexico, Canada, Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao.

⁴ V.I. Lenin “The Collapse of the Second International,” Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1964. *Collected Works*. Volume 21, p. 213-14.

These, with the support of and through a regional force, could use any excuse for an aggression to start from Colombia or Brazil.

For genuine revolutionaries there is no turning back. Any of these scenarios can become a reality and they can all lead to civil war if there is a balance between the popular forces and reaction. The inexorable mechanisms of the class struggle in Venezuela are advancing. At this stage the fight against Yankee imperialism is at the forefront as a general expression of the fight between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in which other layers of society, with national, patriotic, anti-imperialist or class consciousness, join the struggle. However, without the vanguard of the proletariat there will be no real victory. That is why this petty-bourgeois ambiguity cannot last long; social democracy will be displaced either through an agreement with the right or through a turn to the left. This implies: If the right in any of its forms takes over the political leadership of the country, it will be a government of the US with a high level of repression against the people and mainly against the revolutionaries. If a genuinely revolutionary government comes to power, led by the proletariat, the blockade and aggression would be much deeper. Therefore, we Marxist-Leninist communists have no other choice than to prepare ourselves at the national and international level in the best way possible to face the challenges of the not-too-distant future.

An international Marxist-Leninist policy based on the denunciation of the imperialist aggression of the US-EU blockade against Venezuela, the support for the resistance of the people, the creation of popular bases to confront the main enemy, which is common to all our peoples, can allow for the advance of the revolutionary forces in Venezuela and internationally, facilitating the achievement of tactical or strategic objectives,

**Socialism Can Only Be Built With the Worker-Peasant Alliance in Power
and the People in Arms**

CC of the PCMLV
April 2018